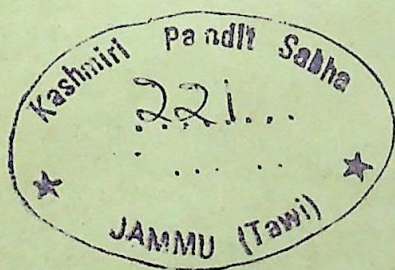


The Story of the Quaker-Management & Ramakrishna Movement : [An Analytical & Comparative Study]

Academic Paper

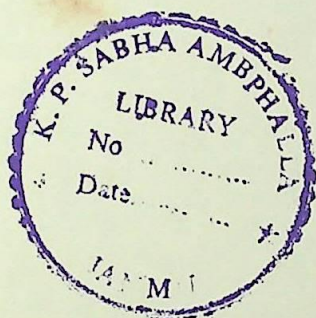


— Ananda

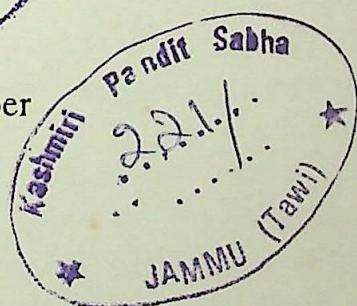


The Story of the Quaker-Management & Ramakrishna Movement

(An Analytical & Comparative Study)



An Academic Paper



Ananda

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INTRODUCTION

This small book-let has been published with the sole intention of bringing out the varied characteristics - both common and differing, between Quaker Movement and Ramakrishna Movement, ofcourse without going very deep into the complexities of both. As it is well known, both the Movements came into being at a time when the religious as well as political atmosphere in both the countries of their origin were ridden with priest-craft, corruption and other allied maladies. An attempt has been made here to bring out the religious, social and to a certain extent political reforms that both the movements tried to usher into the turbulent societies of the time. It is an attempt to depict the essence of both the movements dealing with man and society, which interestingly enough seems to have almost the same common experiences of all types - the same hinderances and progress, responses and reactions, barring ofcourse a few minor details and some particular characteristics of the respective movements. What is found to be common between both, is their essential universalism and a nodal connection and this is exactly what this publication is tended to do - to do some exercises with a view to learn, know and appreciate each other.

What is meant by action here, is specially the interaction that takes place between the individuals and society - certainly not the so-called 'individual' of a certain particular religion, caste or race, but the common history in general of a movement, having some definite exercise in its

spiritual culture as a group reacting with that of another movement. According to Swami Vivekananda's view, when religion has something to do with life and society as a 'whole' there is bound to be some great action taking place. That is how one finds in a man's behaviour everywhere there are some common universal character and pattern to deal with in concrete life. Leave alone man's dealings with God, man's dealings with another man has some common aspects to share with. Maybe each one differs about the idea of God, because of one's abstract and theoretical approach. But here in this treatise, it is a deal with one's practical life and experiences of a movement or an organisation and how we are to benefit from it.

Generally speaking, in the practice of religion, inspite of some apparent differences and agreements, one finds everywhere man's attempts and ability to fight all such limitations of life and materiality and the aspiration to transcend such limitations. When a leader appears amongst such a group, a movement is born. Through the various visuals that emerge regarding these conflicts in which man fights against many crises and obstacles in his attempt to overcome them, one is able to analyse in terms of common outlook and mutual understanding. Specially human behaviour in and through any such organisational character of religion and culture, also speaks of the common reaction and universality of character. Everywhere, in every movement, sect or organisation, however different they are geographically or apart in their socio and cultural history,

there are some universal aspects always surfacing from beneath. This is not only very interesting, but is a very revealing side and educative aspect which can be utilised for the common understanding and sharing of life in the interest of all.

After all, science also does the same thing - it attains the objective character of the same truth universally for the mutual benefit of everyone. If science can do it so successfully, why not religion too share such experiences in a comparative manner through the study of different religious and cultural movements? For any movement to be complete and effective, such a design and comparative study seems to be the need of the hour. Thereby in this process, many of our uncommon experiences too will be of some benefit to us, no doubt !

Many thanks to the Print-Fast, (Khar, Bombay) for the undertaking of its print. I am grateful to Mrs Amruta Rao (mum) for her kind assistance in preparing the manuscript and constant encouragement for any such literary work. Also, I must remember in this connection the Twin Brothers a) Dr Vivek & Nitin Diwadkar; b) Sriman Gautam & Vishaal Narang for their affectionate cooperation and enthusiasm, rather their personal involvement in such a publication as this one.

Ananda

**OFFERED TO
THE DEDICATES AND
DEVOTEES OF THE RAMAKRISHNA
MOVEMENT.**

THE STORY OF THE QUAKER MANAGEMENT AND RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT.

(An Analytical & Comparative Study)

ANANDA

I

"Religion is a question of fact, not of talk," says Swami Vivekananda emphatically, and continues, "we have to analyse our own souls to find what is there. We have to understand it and to realize what is understood. That is religion. No amount of talk will make religion This is one great idea to learn and to hold on to, this idea of realization. The turmoil and difference in religions will cease only when we understand that religion is not in books, and in temples. It is an actual perception. Only the man who has actually perceived God and soul has religion." (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, page 163) No doubt, Swami Vivekananda, the founder of the Ramakrishna Movement had a very strong notion for we find him once again saying: "That the King of Sannyasins (Sri Ramakrishna) can never be preached by men of the world. The latter can never be perfectly sincere; for he cannot but have selfish motives to serve. If Bhagavan (God) incarnates Himself as a householder, I can never believe HIM to be sincere..... When a householder takes the position of the leader of a religious sect, he begins to serve his own interests in the name of principle, hiding the former in the garb of the latter and the result is that the sect becomes rotten to the core. All

religious movements headed by householders have shared the same fate. Without renunciation religion can never stand."

So he warns: "Remember, renunciation consists in the total absence of all selfish motives and not in mere abstinence from external contact, such as touch of one's money kept with another but at the same time enjoying all the benefits." (Ibid, Vol. V. Page 261/62) He concludes by saying ".....attaching too much importance ignorantly to the means brings confusion. The end should never be lost sight of ..." Unless there is total absence of all selfish motives there is every possibility that materiality may throw off the whole thing from this strong ground of renunciation. Along with several other movements this seems to be the crux of the Ramakrishna Movement also!

While coming to the Quaker Movement, it must first of all be understood that this Movement never had a formal monastic character at any point of its history and growth. It was not completely a Protestant Movement either in a subtle sense of the term, although it was an offshoot like it from the mainbody of the Christian faith. "The Quaker Movement mostly consisted of household and lay devotees and was founded by George Fox, 'a shoemaker's apprentice (who) left his native village of Fenny Drayton, in Leicestershire and like Moses and Buddha and Jesus wandered off into the wilderness in search of truth....He was disappointed with life and found himself in a world in which he didn't seem to belong. He could understand neither its brutality nor its

suffering There was something wrong, apparently, with the secular and the religious education of mankind. An educated man, Fox realized, was not necessarily a thinking man. From that time on, he had nothing but contempt for the polysyllabic stupidity of the teachers and the preachers of the world." (LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS, By Henry and Dana Lee Thomas, Blue Ribbon books, N.Y. page 202) "Within six years after he started out on his bloodless campaign to convert the Christians to Christianity, George Fox had gathered around him a little group of devoted young men and women known as the VALIANT SIXTY. Two years later his peaceful army had grown to Fifty Thousand. They called themselves CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT or the SOCIETY OF FRIENDS. Later on they came to be known as Quakers for 'George Fox made his enemies quake and tremble at the word of the Lord!'

The story of the Quakers is one of the most exciting stories of human adventure. George Fox and his followers did not run away from the world. "On the contrary, they faced it with an aggressive determination to make it a better and a gentler place to live in. They advocated the most active kind of resistance - the resistance of a fearless tongue that refused to be silenced- Ridicule, imprisonment, violence and even death had no terrors for them. They showed their contempt for regal pomp by refusing to remove their hats in the presence of kings (for) 'there is something of God in every man: therefore it behoves no man to humble himself

before his brother." This tolerant attitude of Fox reminds one of an incident in the Life of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji at that time was on a walking tour of India and had reached Mount Abu: attracted by the scenic beauty of the place he decided to spend the rainy season in an open cave. One day a Muslim pleader by name Alikhan saw him meditating and was attracted by him; a friendship grew between them and one day the Muslim gentleman asked Swamiji to tell him if he needed anything: realising that the rainy season was round the corner, Swamiji requested him to provide a rough wooden door for the cave to protect him from the onslaught of the rains. Surprised at this simple request. Alikhan convinced Swamiji of the unsuitability of staying in a cave and invited him to come and stay with him in his big bungalow assuring that he will make arrangements for Swamiji's food separately. Swamiji agreed and shifted to his bungalow and was very happy with the arrangements. After few days Alikhan informed Munshi Jagmohan, the personal secretary of the King of Khetri about his distinguished guest. Curiosity aroused Munshi Jagmohan came one day to meet Swamiji and was won over by the personality of Swamiji but he could not help asking Swamiji as how he being a Sanyasi can live and take food in the house of a Muslim. Upset by this silly query Swamiji replied: "True I am a sanyasi but I am above your social customs, taboos and inhibitions. If I so desire I can take food even with a scavenger: I am not afraid of God because I know He will approve my action: neither am I scared about shastras since I am certain I am not violating them, however what I am afraid of is people like

you and the conservative society to which you belong. What do you know about God? How conservant are you with the scriptures? I see Brahman everywhere; even in a worm or insect I see the manifestation of that same Brahman I see in you. For me nothing is lowly and nothing is high."

Actually some of these Quaker men were as dedicated as the Catholic monks to their cause and philosophy. Many of them were persecuted and suffered physical and social vituperation may be due to the social and political conditions prevailing at that time, "in Continental Europe Thirty Years' war was on and at its height and in England King Charles I had been amusing himself by sticking the heads of his socalled enemies upon a picket fence" Under such conditions religion was the greatest casualty. Taking into consideration all these it can be justly said that "The Quakers in the time of George Fox, those religious anarchists and militant pacifists of the seventeenth century, were among the bravest soldiers that ever fought for human freedom. And they carried on their long fight, and won their final victory, without shedding a single drop of their enemy's blood." (Living Biographies of Religious Leaders Page 204)

In the light of the above reflections, Swamiji's statement, that renunciation consists in the total absence of all selfish motives seems very fitting. This is not to be taken as a mere superficial warning but as a concentrated wisdom of the age - a period which must have witnessed the fall of mighty kingdoms and religions. Specially the fall of religions

may be in many cases be attributed to the greed and selfishness of the people who occupied important posts in those religious movements. The fall came inspite of dedicated souls like George Fox, Penn etc. etc. Even a person like the great William Penn, who is regarded as one of the pioneers of the Quaker Movement was accused, rather criticised for his land-grabbing tendency, may be not for his own use but for the cause of the movement. It is said about William Penn that George Fox was able to "convince him (Penn) - Fox never used the harsher word 'converted' - from the sword to the spirit." This son of the British admiral was rather vain of his appearance and proud of his glittering scabbard - an ornament which he wore as a continual reminder of his military days. But gradually, as he came under the influence of the Quaker religion of gentleness, he began to doubt the propriety of this decoration. He appealed to Fox for advice on the matter. 'Wear thy sword' said his leader, as long as thou canst'. Several weeks later George Fox met Friend William in the street: 'Where is thy sword' he asked with smile. 'I wrote it' replied Penn, 'as long as I could.' (Ibid, page 209) It is also said that William Penn was too much weighted down with such materiality as to acquire landed-property, ofcourse not for his own personal use but for the construction of good lasting buildings in the colony of Quakers. Because of this, his obsession, not only he himself but even the Quaker Movement had to suffer a great set-back during his time: this trait of his, for the acquisition of landed-property and other things, may be attributed to some extent to the colonial notions acquired from his father

- Admiral Sir William Penn who played a significant role in the growth of the British Empire. Why blame Penn for this his weakness, when sometimes people from well-to-do families behave in a peculiar manner when it comes to the lining of their own nests, specially when it is through some organisations - religious or otherwise. Atleast Penn did it for his Movement and not for his own personal aggradisement

This human tendency however much we would like to ignore saying that it is but natural, was abhorred by Swami Vivekananda, specially he could not tolerate such a trait in a sannyasin: this is clear when he says: "The sannyasin should have nothing to do with the rich, his duty is with the poor, to have loving care to them and serve them joyfully with all his might." Atleast to pay respect to the so-called non-respectful poorer sections of the population is one of the vows administered to the sannyasins of the RAMAKRISHNA ORDER. It is also very pertinent, as stated by Swami Vivekananda that "A true sannyasin should scrupulously avoid 'that' " - meaning his (sannyasin's) association with the rich and mighty (excepting may be for the sake of the work connected with the institution and NEVER for his personal use or influence).

Like Swami Vivekananda, D Elton, Trueblood, Professor of Philosophy, Earlham College, states in his book titled 'THE PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS' (Pub. Richmond, Indiana) that: "Both Penn and Barclay, in upholding the Quaker practice of not giving greater respect to people of

high station, made use of a passage in a letter to the Roman matron Celantia attributed to Jerome," in which it was stated as well as emphasized, "Heed not thy nobility, nor let that be a reason for thee to take place of any, repute, not those of meaner extraction to be thy inferiors, our religion admits no respect of persons, nor doth it lead us to value the outward condition of men, but their inward frame and spirit: it is hereby that we pronounce men noble or base. With God, not to serve sin is the only freedom, and not to excel in virtue is to be noble.....Besides, it is a folly for any to boast his gentility, since all are equally esteemed by God....Nor is it material to what estate a man is born, since all are equally new creatures in Christ."

Robert Barclay, another Quaker did not find it necessary to address the king in any other manner than he would have done to any person so he addressed King Charles II as 'thee' - "...exactly as he would have done to an equal or to a supposed inferior. Warning the king against temptations, Barclay wrote: "Against what snare, as well as the temptation of those that may or do feed thee, and prompt thee to evil, the most excellent, and prevalent remedy will be, to apply thyself to that light of Christ, which shineth in thy conscience: which neither can nor will flatter thee, nor suffer thee to be at ease in thy sins; but doth and will deal plainly and faithfully with thee, as those that are followers thereof have also done'."

We find many such parallels in the life of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, when they had

been brave and bold to point out the short comings of rich and influential people without fear or favour. Once ".....one day Rani Rasmani went to the temple to worship the Divine Mother and pay her obeisance to the Goddess. But while she was externally engaged in worship, she was eagerly thinking of the possible success or failure of a pending law-suit instead of being absorbed in the divine service. The Master was then sitting there and singing songs for her at her request. He was in a state of ecstasy. Divining the state of the Rani's mind, he (Sri Ramakrishna) chastised and corrected her by striking her tender person and exclaiming: 'Ah! That thought is even here!' The Rani, a spiritual aspirant fit to have the grace of the universal Mother detected the weakness of her mind and became repentant." (RAMAKRISHNA THE GREAT MASTER, page 173). It is said that once when Swami Vivekananda was travelling extensively in Rajasthan, he met Raja Mangal Singh, the king of State of Alwar. Mangal Singh was proud of being highly westernised and had the dubious distinction of being critical of all that was Indian and ancient. One day he asked Swami Vivekananda as to why he, Swami Vivekananda preferred to beg for alms when with his intelligence he could earn a good salary anywhere. Prompt came the reply from Swamiji as to why Mangal Singh preferred to spend most of his time with his Western friends in hunting and merry making to which Mangal Singh said 'I do not know, but I prefer it that way' 'So do I' said Swamiji. 'I prefer this life of a monk and live on alms'. On another day Mangal Singh who prided himself in not believing in idol worship, life here and

hereafter etc. asked mischievously since he did not believe in idol worship etc. what could happen to him in the future implying thereby that nothing would happen to him, and that all this idol worship etc. was nothing but bunkum. Swamiji simply replied that belief in such things is purely personal and that one should follow one's own convictions but at the same time he was thinking of exposing the ignorance of Mangal Singh in such things when he saw the photograph of Mangal Singh on the wall. Immediately he asked the chief Minister to bring-down the photo and give it to him. This was done and Swamiji placing the photo on the floor asked the chief minister and all others assembled there to spit on it. All were shocked, what is he asking them to do - to spit on the photo of their king? When nobody ventured again Swamiji ordered them to spit on the photo to which the Chief Minister rebutted 'How can we spit on the photo of our revered King, what are you asking us to do', to which Swamiji said 'Why not, this photo is only a piece of paper; your king does not live in it, for according to your king idol worship is nothing but the worship of stones and clay; similarly this photo of his is nothing but a piece of paper, it does not move on its own, it has no flesh and blood like your king has, still you do not want to spit on it because you see the image of your king in the photo; so according to you if you spit on his photo it is nothing short of spitting on him.' Then turning to the king he told: "See Mangal Singh, your loyal subjects do not want to spit on the photo since they see your image in it and so they respect this photo as much as they respect you. Similar is the case with a devotee who worships idols:he/she sees his

'Ishta', His qualities and attributes in that idol which helps them to concentrate their mind on it exclusively, although others may find the idol nothing but a bit of stone. The devotee is not worshipping the stone but the principle of godhood, the Chidananda Swaroopa of God. However this is my interpretation: I do not know what is yours, neither do I care to know about it since I firmly believe in my interpretation."

Again we find Sri Ramakrishna refusing to proceed further in the pilgrimage to Kashi unless Mathur Babu, son-in-law of Rani Rasmani (who was financing the entire pilgrimage and also looking after Sri Ramakrishna and his people at Dakshineswar) fed, supplied oil and a piece of cloth to each of the villagers:" ...the Master's heart became filled with compassion on seeing the miserable plight of the men and women of a poor village there. He requested Mathur to feed them one day and give a piece of cloth to each of them. Mathur did accordingly." On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna "accompanied Mathur Babu on a tour to one of the latter's estates at the time of the collection of rents. For two years the harvests had failed and the tenants were in a state of extreme poverty. The Master asked Mathur to remit their rents, distribute help to them and in addition give the hungry people a sumptuous feast. When Mathur grumbled, the Master said: 'You are only the steward of the Divine Mother. They are the Mother's tenants. You must spend the Mother's money. When they are suffering, how can you refuse to help them? You MUST help them.' Again

Mathur had to give in." Such is the nature of great saintly men; their attitude is like that of "Sri Ramakrishna's sympathy for the poor, sprang from his perception of God in all created beings. His sentiment was not that of the humanist or philanthropist. To him the service of men was the same as the worship of God" (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 36).

Swami Vivekananda places Lord Buddha as the greatest Karma-yogi who dared to say "I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all the subtle doctrines about the soul? Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is believe not because some old manuscripts are produced, believe not because it is your national belief, because you have been made to believe it from your childhood;but reason it all out, and after you have analysed it, then, if you find that it will do good to one and all, believe it, live up to it and help others to live up to it." (selections from Works of Vivekananda, page 36).

Quaker John Woolman was one such person; it is said that even at the young age of 29 years soon after his marriage: "....the couple lived with simplicity and frugality, (so that) more and more of Woolman's time could be spent in the travelling ministry to which he felt so strongly called." Woolman was not only well known for his austerity but was also a pioneer in opposing slavery in any form: he was so much against it, it seems that he once quietly left a party held by one of his intimate Quaker friends in the middle

without telling anybody since he came to know that this particular friend still kept some slaves under him. Trueblood describes: "When he ate and drank and lodged at no personal expense, with people who lived in luxury, because of the hard toil of the slaves, he felt increasingly uneasy."

Swami Vivekananda was also against any kind of slavery: he once burst forth saying: "Slave of the body, slave of the mind, slave of the world, slave of a good word, slave of a bad word, slave of passion, slave of happiness, slave of life, slave of death, slave of everything! This slavery has to be broken." He went so far as to declare that "The slave and the tyrant are synonymous...." (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. III, page 25 and Vol. V, page 14).

Even an ordinary person need not be a slave for anything: a householder although living with the family can be austere and simple in habits and life. The best example of such a person is ofcourse Sri Ramakrishna who if he desired so, could have demanded and got anything from Mathur Babu and Rani Rasmani, preferred to live a simple and austere life. It is said that once when "it was the beginning of winter, Sri Ramakrishna had felt the need of some shirts and had asked M. to bring them. Besides two broadcloth-shirts, M. had brought another of a heavy material, for which Sri Ramakrishna had not asked. The following conversation took place between the Master and Mathur Babu:

Master: "You had better take that one back with you.

You can use it yourself. There is nothing wrong in that. Tell me, what kind of shirt did I ask you to bring?

M: You told me to get you plain ones, Sir. You didn't ask me to buy the heavier one."

Master: "Then please take that one back. You see, Dwarika Babu gave me a shawl. The Marwari devotees also brought one for me. I couldn't accept....."

(Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 656).

Sri Ramakrishna's habits and wants were very simple and frugal indeed just like those of some classic saints.

Great spiritual leaders are like that; unmindful of their appearance and dress and unrestrained in the pursuit of their goal - God realisation and inspiration of godwardliness in others. It is narrated that Woolman landed in London after five weeks of voyage 'with his undyed clothing and his rumpled appearance....made an unfavourable impression'. Many took him to be a New Jersey rustic or a crank. Sri Ramakrishna also during his days of sadhana was most unkempt in his dress and manners and so was known as the half-mad God-man of Dakshineswar amongst the Calcuttans specially in the nobility and aristocratic circles. Even news about this reached his home town Kamaŗpukur and made his young wife to rush to Calcutta in panic. But the same Ramakrishna very often used to visit the social and spiritual elite of Calcutta and talk to them for hours on God and spirituality, mostly to inspire them towards godwardliness. In their zeal and earnestness to spread the

word of God, these men sometimes neglect their health even. Woolman died of small-pox in 1772 and he was buried without much fanfare in the Bishop hill graveyard. Whereas Sri Ramakrishna died of cancer and exhaustion in Calcutta city only in a very modest rented (by his handful of disciples who were as poor as he himself was) garden house in Cossipore near Calcutta. These chosen men of God are so universal in their faith that there remains no distinction between themselves and other creatures of the world. Sri Ramakrishna would not pluck a flower from the plant thinking that he would be hurting the plant neither would he walk on the grass in the fear that he would be causing pain to the grass. It is narrated that Woolman would not ride in a horse-driven coach: "...because of reports of overdriving the horses and exposure of men, connected with the stage coaches: he would walk all the way to York, by way of Westermoorland country, traversing more than four hundred miles." All these he did "In his moral scruple against personal gain from suffering and its consequent encouragement, Woolman was strict as ever."

Universally it is expected that a spiritual person should be a paradoxical combination of simplicity, holy boldness tempered with a sensitive tenderness which can also be considered as mild- gentleness. Such a life should or can be an admixture of various perhaps sometimes contradictory qualities, so as to be regarded as a perfection in completeness. But it should never be one sided and narrow according to Sri Ramakrishna.

As it happens in the personal or individual life, in the life and character of an organisation also such changes do come and go in the same manner. It never remains monotonous or restricted to one type. The same thing also happened to the Quaker Movement as pointed out by Trueblood: "The time came when the Peningtons (a patron-family) decided to make a big break with their former way of life and to become known openly as 'QUAKERS'. In fact they started living a type of abdicated life of renouncement and austerity."

In the case of Ramakrishna Movement it was somewhat different: since "Sri Ramakrishna did not found any sect, but only allowed a group of youthful enthusiasts to cluster round his great personality by no other law than that of soul's kinship and inward affinity. After the Master had passed away, this little group of his young disciples, the glorious legacy of Sri Ramakrishna to the world, set themselves earnestly to the task of perpetuating the great Ideal revealed through his teachings and manifested in his divine person, by realising it in their individual lives and by making permanent provision for its transmission to the world. Within a decade of this silent self-preparation, seven thousand miles away from the small improvised monastery at Baranagore the voice of the Master rang before a select gathering of the world's representative scholars and divines through the inspired lips of his greatest apostle. Not much unlike his Master, who used to cry out from the housetops for the young aspirants who were to come to him, Swami

Vivekananda stationed himself, as it were, on the heights of modern society and proclaimed aloud to humanity the unique message of his Master. The effect produced was almost electric. After a score of centuries the message of Aryavarta was heard again in foreign lands. Right within the stronghold of modern culture and civilisation was planted the banner of the ancient Indian ideals of Spirituality and Service.....India too, the land of spiritual ideals, witnessed a mighty religious upheaval, which strove, on the one hand to put down all forms of meaningless conventionalism that had grown over the Hindu society by centuries of accretion, and on the other, to arrest the drift of modern educated India towards the materialistic civilisation of the West..... As a natural consequence the next three decades saw the foundation of the central monastery of the Order at Belur, the inauguration of the Ramakrishna Mission, the admission and enrolment of hundreds of monastic and lay adherents, and the establishment of quite a number of activities all over the country and abroad." (THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH & MISSION CONVENTION, 1926)

Like Mathur Babu, Suren Mitra and Jadu Mullick who met Sri Ramakrishna and were completely won over by the childlike devotion the Master had for the Divine Mother and his affection for his disciples: the Penningtons also attained their goal at the altar by claiming: 'I have met with the seed - understand that word and then thou wilt be satisfied, and inquire no further. I have met with my God (so did Girishchandra say after meeting with Sri Ramakrishna), I

have met with my Saviour and he hath not been present with me without his salvation, but I have felt the healings drop upon my soul from under his wings. I drop upon my soul from under his wings. I have met with the seed's Father; there I have read his nature, his love, his comparisons, his tenderness, which have melted, overcome and changed my heart before Him."

There is great similarity which is most surprising and almost comical between these two Movements in that they were patronised and mainly maintained by aristocrats and members of the nobility. Quaker Movement although it was always nearer to the ordinary people contained mostly aristocrats as its members. It is even said that Cromwell was interested in George Fox and had invited him to his house and had discussed with him religion, politics and war and that 'each of them was pleasantly surprised at the other's sympathy and discernment. George Fox married Margaret Fell, the widow of Judge Thomas Fell of Swarthmore Hall. Margaret was noble by birth, attractive, cultured and prosperous to a high degree, she might have been easily the leader in society and a welcome guest at the royal court.'

Sri Ramakrishna was also sustained and looked after by the scion of a rich family - Rani Rasmani and her noble son-in-law Mathur Babu. It was their love and respect for this penniless Brahmin of Dakshineswar which made it possible for the Master to live a spiritual life free from financial worries. How much the Master valued the love and respect of Mathur Babu is evident when he tells his wife

Sarada Devi on her arrival for the first time at Dakshineswar sick and tired: "Sri Ramakrishna was much disturbed at seeing Sarada Devi in such a weakened condition. He arranged for a separate bed for her in his own room and said again and again with regret, 'Ah, you have come too late - my Mathur is no longer here to look after you!" With the coming of Narendra Datta (later became the famous Swami Vivekananda) who also belonged to an aristocratic lawyers family and was the architect of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission of later years was mostly patronised by many upper-middle-class, aristocrats and princes. His passage money to Chicago to address the Parliament of Religions was given by the Raja of Khetri and later when he became well known as Swami Vivekananda many of his Western admirers belonged to rich families and some of them came from princely families. This is very strange since Swami Vivekananda aspired the Ramakrishna Movement to be for the awakening of the people at the grass root level. He desired that the message of his Master should reach the tillers of the soil, labourers in the fields, workers in the factories, sellers of fritters and the masons at the construction sites.

One of the reasons for this seemingly anti-climax trend may be the enlightened and somewhat philosophical nature of the teachings put forward by the movements like the Quakers and Ramakrishna Movement in contrast to the then existing extremely orthodox rigid religious movements which apparently looked very sophisticated and beyond the

understanding of the common man, till now used to the mombo-jumbo, rites and rituals including sacrifices of the priestcraft. The social taboos, the fear of breaking loose from the centuries old traditions which to the simple brain of a farmer or a labourer might invite the wrath of the Gods might have proved a hinderance at this stage. The only people who were interested in this new trend was the upper middle and middle class people. The rich loathed to give up their pomp and show usually exhibited during the innumerable worships and rituals. The labourer and the agriculturist could not afford to spend his time in trying to understand the intricacies of the Movement. So also the spiritual, social, cultural and political reasons did not allow it to spread itself as much as it should have done by now. So far it has remained a spiritual movement under the aegis of the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission and very few lay devotees have been able to help its expansion effectively. On the other hand the Quaker Movement did not face such a problem for there were many Governors of states who were Quakers and even some of the Presidents of the Republic were very close and sympathetic to the Quaker Movement. What with the gradual recession of the nationalist and patriotic fervour in India, it is very likely that the Ramakrishna Movement will be somewhat affected both politically as well as economically, may be for that very reason, nothing is visualized clearly now beyond its immediate activities.

The attitude of Quakers was very similar to that of the Ramakrishna Movement and its torch-bearers.

Substantiating this point here we have Trueblood who remarks that; "What is really most surprising about the Quaker aristocrats is that they never sought peculiar power or authority for themselves. They never seemed to feel superior to the rude men from the north of England who inspite of their lesser opportunities, were their major teachers. But they did something which the rude men were unable to do. They influenced the Governments: they thought systematically; they wrote brilliantly. Without these four men - Pennington, Ellwood, William Penn and Barclay, it is doubtful if the Movement would have survived, or that people called Quakers would be generally known today."

It is remarkable that the Ramakrishna Movement too followed the same pattern, may be with some exceptions here and there, that is all. Ramakrishna Movement with its vast network of literature in various languages besides Bengali and English succeeded in carrying the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda to every nook and corner of not only India, but also abroad specially America and the United Kingdom. The Movement was fortunate to have powerful writers like Swami Vivekananda, Mahendranath Gupta, better known as 'M' (who 'recorded in his diary Sri Ramakrishna's conversations with his devotees).

These are the first directly recorded words, in the spiritual history of the world, of a man recognised as belonging to the class of Buddha and Christ Mahendranath was instrumental, through his personal

contacts, in spreading the Master's message among many young and aspiring souls, Swami Saradananda the author of 'SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE GREAT MASTER', Swami Nikhilananda who translated from Bengali the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Sister Nivedita the great disciple of Swami Vivekananda and many many more eminent writers in various languages. Like the Quaker Movement, the Ramakrishna Movement also had to pass through a period of agitation etc. mostly provoked by the political elements and the indifferent and callous attitude of the C.P.M. as well as provincial and central government; however the movement has been able to weather all these irritants in a very successful manner and now it is no longer bothered about them.

II

Both the Movements – Quakers Movement and Ramakrishna Movement were in the modern day parlance the movements of the lay-people, by the lay-people and for the lay-people. They were never lacking in preaching and ministration and what is so significant to note is their informal growth. The strength and beauty of both the Movements lay in their preaching and ministration coupled with informality. "When Fox (the founder of Quaker Movement) was struck in the face for telling people to be human, he would wipe away the blood and finish what he had to say. He never struck back. He had a far better weapon for the fighting of his battles - the weapon of reason, pleading in the cause of justice. When once Fox was beaten up very badly people

urged him to take legal action against the hooligans who had battered him. Fox refused. He had no personal quarrel with them. His own life mattered nothing in this fight for universal freedom. 'If the Lord did forgive my assailants' he said, 'why should I trouble about them?' he said. (Living Biographies of Religious leaders, page 207). Sri Ramakrishna could explain away any highly intricate spiritual doctrines with the help of fables and everyday experiences. Great scholars and pundits who came armed with scriptures were charmed by his simple talk and child-like faith in the Divine Mother. Once when an idol was accidentally broken and none of the pundits who were called in by Rani Rasmani to give their opinions as to what should be done could not come to an unanimous verdict and Master's opinion was sought: he simply put a counter question to Rani Rasmani: 'If one of your sons-in-law slips and falls thereby breaking an arm would you discard him outright?' saying so he volunteered to repair the broken idol himself, which he did so well that none could say that it was once broken. Swami Vivekananda who went to Chicago in 1893 to participate in the Parliament of Religions did not have any idea about the conference, nor had he come prepared to speak to an audience comprising of the cream of spiritual society from various countries. But his opening words addressing the congregations as 'My brothers and Sisters of America' had such a hypnotic grip over the audience that it had earned many friends to the movement in such a short time. What attracted the highly critical American people was the informal manner in which Swamiji tackled the volley of

questions on India and her Vedic culture. Ramakrishna Movement also was very very informal in the beginning - however gradually with the introduction of system/organisation and control, it acquired an official monastic character and a formal sense of orderliness. This was not so in the early days of the Movement. Many of its centres were started by lay-devotees with a very small beginning and only when it developed into a full-grown institution was it handed over to the Ramakrishna Mission or Math. The role played by individual householder devotees of Sri Ramakrishna in establishing such centres was really very significant. One can easily ofcourse with some imagination visualise the nucleus of this great movement taking birth in the houses of great devotees like Balaram Bose, Durga Charan Nag, Akshoy Kumar Sen, Baikuntha Nath Sanyal, Ramachandra Dutt. The first and foremost to write about Sri Ramakrishna was (as already been said) Mahendranath Gupta. It is said that they used to meet once in a fortnight or so in one of these devotee's house and discuss spiritual matters and usually the person who would start and lead these discussions would be Narendranath Dutta (later Swami Vivekananda)

Similarly in the Quaker Movement it is reported: "In the beginning of the Movement, the fact that a large proportion of the members, of both sexes, were clearly engaged in the ministry, was perhaps, from the point of view of the outside observer, the most striking single feature of Quaker life. Not only were the rank and file of the members,

ministers in the sense that they preferred humble services to their fellow men in daily life: many of them were also ministers in the sense that they preached wherever and whenever they could." No doubt it was clearly all a joint effort and endeavour, informal though. What an effective strength it must have been for the movement.

To appreciate and cherish the noble work done by such movements to the cause of humanity a full and proper understanding of all that has been said by Swami Vivekananda about sannyasins and householders is most essential. To emphasise the purity of heart and mind and renunciation as the main qualities in the spiritual life and as the core or heart of all religious movements, atleast as it should be, Swamiji remarked: "Sri Ramakrishna wept and prayed to the Divine Mother to send him such a one to talk with as would not have in him the slightest tinge of Kama-kanchana, for he would say, 'My lips burn when I talk with the worldly minded.'" But at the same time the Saint of Dakshineswar was fully aware that each and everyone cannot reach that state of renunciation and a middle path has to be there to accommodate the householders with their responsibilities, sorrows and joys; so very shrewdly he encouraged such people to stay in the fortress of the household-life and at the same time try to follow somekind of spiritual practice. Complete renunciation was only for the worthy few was his opinion. He advised the householders: "Do all your duties, but keep your mind on God. Live with all - with wife and children, father and mother - and serve them.

Treat them as if they were very dear to you, but know in your heart of hearts that they do not belong to you."

Swami Vivekananda, worthy disciple of the Master put into practice the thought of his Guru by combining both the Math and Mission - Monastic and Laity, in his order and he never meant these two to be two separate entities. No, he never wanted them to go apart as two exclusive aspects of the Order. However these lofty ideals of Swamiji were somewhat wrongly understood. This was due to the narrowing down a priority and a right emphasis here and there which were due to nothing but a cultic pattern and a parochial sense of some people associated with the movement. Hats-off to the laity (devotee/householders) who gathered round the Order through thick and thin and appreciated the message of purity and renunciation very rightly as it was meant to be without any fuss and useless bickerings. Swamiji was able to found an unique Order because of some "...formative influences that went to determine his vision (which) may be classified under the following heads: his Master's great prophecies regarding him: his own training and realisations: his knowledge of Western philosophy, history and Sanskrit scriptures: the constant study of the divine life of his Guru before him, in which he found the key to life and the verifications of the Shastras: his travels all over his motherland in the course of which he availed himself all the opportunities of comparing her as she then was, with what she had been, and of studying the life and thought of the people, their needs and

possibilities and the diversities of their customs and faiths. Mixing with princes and peasants, with saints and scholars, he grasped in its comprehensiveness that vast whole of which his Master's life and personality was but an intense epitome. These then - the Shastras, the Guru and the Motherland - are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the symphony of Swamiji's life and works. These were the treasures which he wanted to offer to the world at large." (RAMAKRISHNA MATH & MISSION CONVENTION, page 24).

However it is sad to note that the experience of the Quaker Movement in this respect was quite different. It was not that easy as in the case of Ramakrishna Movement: "to equip God's people for work in his service" (EPHESIANS.4:12). For not being traditionally religious oriented the Quakers were often banished and tortured both in England including Ireland as well as in the United States of America. "Soon after he (George Fox) began to deliver his message of peace, he was cast into jail. His imprisonment, he tells us in his quiet humorous way, was due to his telling a group of people to 'stop disputing about Jesus and to start obeying HIM' he underwent no less than sixty arrests - in which he was compelled to spend a great part of his life." That was not all: "The magistrates and the jailers regarded him as a dangerous character. He wanted the world to be at peace. He was therefore classed as an atheist, a traitor and felon. And so they kept him in jail and tried to cudgel the peaceful notions out of his head.....

inspite of his powerful constitution, the jailers at last succeeded in wrecking his health. But they did not succeed in wrecking his spirit." (Living Biographies of Religious leaders).

Further we are told that: "The priests and professors in the South of Ireland were so envious against truth, that they got an order from Henry Cromwell, the Lord Deputy of Ireland to banish Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill out of the nation, and a guard of soldiers were ordered to conduct them from place to place till they were shipped off." Luckily some of the guards were not that cruel and bad, so many Quakers were deported to the United States, which was a colony then of criminals and prisoners. Even here,'..... in their zeal to make the new country safe for the Puritans, the Pilgrim Fathers had made it very unsafe for the Quakers." In the 'bloody town of Boston' four of the Quaker leaders - William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, William Leddra and Mary Dyer - had been hanged for no other crime than that of setting foot in Massachusetts against the wishes of Governor Endicott. In the same city, men and women were thrown into jail for their 'reckless presumptuousness' in offering a cup of milk to a Quaker When Fox came to America, he was able to do very little in the way of softening the hearts of the Puritans....."

Fortunately, Ramakrishna Movement never experienced such harsh treatment like banishment from the country or official persecution - atleast they were not that severe. However, it is reported that once a British Governor

in his over enthusiasm to be loyal to the Empire had expressed his displeasure and uttered something against the national movement and its connection with Ramakrishna Order, that is all. Ofcourse if his views were taken seriously by the Government it could have led to official banishment of atleast some of the members of the Ramakrishna Movement. Otherwise, monks of Ramakrishna Order were never persecuted at anytime. However there does exist a tragedy in the history of this Order. One Swamiji, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna was killed when a bomb was thrown at him by an unknown person - may be a Christian fanatic during a religious meeting in America.

At the same time Ramakrishna Order cannot claim that it was popular and recognised from its inception. It took many years for it to be recognised as a powerful and service oriented movement at home and abroad. Once the Swamijis from Ramakrishna Order were looked down with contempt as 'bhangi-swamis' because of their attitude and service to the Harijan (originally known as 'bhangis') patients in the hospitals and other social work like education, family welfare, and for mingling freely with the poor and outcastes. This attitude is understandable when one realises that such humanitarian and social work was never undertaken by the traditional monks, who were all very orthodox and suffered from anti-work syndrome. According to their philosophy, sadhus were supposed to take/accept service of all kinds but never to render any service in the least.

Further, the monks of Ramakrishna Order, most of them were well educated and cultured with very good family background and as such were much more disciplined and most of them had come on their own with the sole purpose of serving the poor, illiterate wretches who were all trodden down mercilessly all these years by the tradition-bound and ritualistic society of those days. The humble and loving Ramakrishna had attracted them and the lion-hearted anti-ritual hero Swami Vivekananda expected all of them (the Sadhus) to behave in a worthy manner as the true representatives of Sri Ramakrishna - most probably this great responsibility so deftly placed on them worked very effectively in the moulding of the Order. They were all expected to be brave and fearless, ready to face any ordeal but to be gentle, humble and meek to the poor, the sick and the ill-treated. Swamiji had again and again made it clear that "a scientific acumen and a religious aspiration are never contradictory. But ultimately, the heart must rule, intuition should be made supreme."

More or less, the principle on which the Quaker Movement functions is the same for "The Quaker minister is one who seeks, not to glorify himself, but to make himself unnecessary. The purpose of the preaching is to help to produce something more valuable than preaching." The same can be interpreted in the language of the Ramakrishna Movement as having of some impersonal approach, avoiding the 'self' and the 'ego'. In Swami Vivekananda's words: "....in the state of Sattva we see the very nature of

things; we go beyond the senses and beyond reason. The adamant wall that shuts us in is egoism: we refer everything to ourselves: thinking I do this, that and the other. Get rid of this puny 'I'; kill this diabolism in us.....until we give up the world manufactured by the ego never can we enter the kingdom of heaven. None ever did, none ever will.." (Selections from the Works of Swami Vivekananda, page 394).

But it is no doubt difficult to perform exactly as desired above; George Fox suggested a safeguarding factor in this context when he said: "It is a mighty thing to be in the work of the ministry of the Lord and to go forth in that: for it is not as customary preaching, but to bring people to the end of all preaching." To understand this standard of preaching in the Swami Vivekananda way will be, as he himself has said to help people (devotees) to grow, to come out of the kindergarten stage, which sometimes becomes unfortunately, a perpetual necessity. Religion should help in the awakening, to become self-confident and not to go by a prop all the time. Actually this type of preaching can be called only strength-giving, otherwise any ministration after sometime becomes monotonous, melodramatic release of many an aspect of human melancholy, sorrow and suffering. Religion should lead to freedom - independence - not surely a dependent psychology.

Swamiji's notion of a 'preacher' was quite unique and demanding: according to him a preacher was not exactly a teacher - but an awakener of both the scientific and spiritual

enlightenment: a preacher's role is not merely to explain and justify the old prejudices and superstitions, as many did, during or before his time. Preaching is not a propaganda of some dogmatic or doctrinal character of religious views and time old orthodox scriptural interpretation following a rut. Preaching could never be simply pouring out one's learning ostentatiously. On the other hand it should be sustaining and life-giving. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "There is no harm in teaching others if the preacher has a commission from the Lord. Nobody can confound a preacher who teaches people after having received the command of God. Getting a ray of light from the goddess of learning, a man becomes so powerful that before him big scholars seem mere earthworms." Only a preacher of such a stature is capable of delivering man-making and character-building type of knowledge.

The Quaker Movement did have such preachers since Charles Braithwaite, the Quaker has said: "....the spiritual leaders were the chief-factors in the organized society of Friends, as they had been the earlier stages of the movement." Like Sri Ramakrishna, Braithwaite (a quaker) urged the need for authority from God for preaching and 'not derieved from human appointment' and 'it depended from meeting to meeting upon the call of the Lord and upon the message which HE might give raising up the virtuous to its truth in the hearts of Friends.' Further rightly he endorsed that "only slowly, and almost imperceptilly, did the spiritual government of the Church pass to the main

body of Friends." Quakers even went so far as to prohibit ministers, charged with moral lapses, cloudy financial deals and self aggrandizement from preaching until they had cleared themselves of all the charges.

In these modern times, DHARMA or the formation of a sect for Loka-samgraha on a mass-scale has gained ground considerably and very often people are very much impressed by the 'number' or quantity instead of quality - it has become an effective means to attract people and make them do things, which as an individual he/she would not even dream of doing. Now-a-days 'religion' has become a commodity which sells fast. Ofcourse there is nothing wrong or objectionable in having any number of study circles and hundreds of reading groups provided they are exclusively dedicated and devoted to spiritual and social developments and do not become fertile breeding ground for populism and narrow politics. Even Sri Ramakrishna was in favour of such small groups where people sing and chant the name of God, in fact he often used to join the devotees in their singing and dancing. Once it is said that when he went to attend the festival at Panihati he "joined the kirtan party of Navadvip Gosami, Mani Sen's Guru and danced, totally forgetting the world....he entered by turn into all the moods of ecstasy. In deep samadhi he stood still, his face radiating a divine glow. In deep state of partial consciousness he danced, sometimes gently and sometimes with the vigour of a lion. Again, regaining consciousness of the world he himself lead the chorus and sang." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page

253). Such informal sittings amongst devotees does such a good purpose. Specially in the Ramakrishna Order, such a practice has come to stay amongst the devotees themselves; it is very good indeed since it encourages people to come out of their inhibition and discuss with their fellow devotees spiritual matters, specially in the initial stages - after all one house-holder can visualise and appreciate the hurdles and hinderances that face another devotee rather than monk who has completely renounced family life altogether.

It was a different story with the Quaker Movement since there hardly existed any norms or signs with which a Quaker and others could be distinguished since: "a sharp distinction would have been difficult to make, in as much as there was no ordination and distinction of dress or ceremonials duties etc. Nevertheless, the distinction between types of ministry was well understood."

Like the Order founded by Swami Vivekananda which respected, infact drew sustenance from the ancient Vedas: ".....the early Quaker Movement repeated much of the 1st Century pattern (of Christianity). Beginning with fierce opposition, both to and from the professionalised clergy, Quakers soon developed their own strong minstry. The practical paradox of Quakerism is that of an exceptionally able ministry arising in opposition to the ministry. How can this be explained?" Although Swami Vivekananda was so much against priestcraft and the corresponding rituals, it is most surprising that he chose a priest (Sri Ramakrishna who

was a priest for sometime in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar) to be his Guru, but what an extra-ordinary Guru he was. Swami Vivekananda's idea of a Guru - '....Acharya (Guru) means purity inside and outside. The Guru must be a man who has known, has actually realised the Divine Truth, has perceived as the spirit' (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. III page 360 and Vol. VIII, page 115) fitted Sri Ramakrishna perfectly. Even in the Quaker Movement which had rejected the official priesthood, "advanced by producing as the price of survival, its own kind of spiritual leadership." Like Swami Vivekananda, the Quakers also believed that, "Sometimes the sincere yet uneducated man is a better priest to someone than is the educated theologian." No wonder Sri Ramakrishna was convinced even at the young age of fourteen".... that he had no use for any bread-winning education of the type imparted at school. In keeping with this model it is true that Ramakrishna Movement attaches much more value to other humane qualifications rather than to sheer book knowledge. Otherwise both the movements had many highly educated devotees.

In so far as the universal aspect of the ministry is concerned -- Ramakrishna Mission is much more broadbased in their ideas and outlook. People belonging to all caste and creeds are allowed to join the Mission. Whereas Quakers were fundamentally biased on Christian ideas. To a Quaker, "The universal ministry is based on the idea that there is a sense in which every follower of Christ

is and must be a minister. In short he must be a servant of Christ and of his fellow men and the church must actually be a 'servant people'." No doubt Ramakrishna Movement too consider themselves to be the servant of Sri Ramakrishna as well as a teacher of the people. Although the entire Ramakrishna Movement is built round the central figure of Sri Ramakrishna it is never that narrow and formal to Sri Ramakrishna only like the Quakers to Christ and the church. Ramakrishna Movement gives equal honour and respect to Christ, Buddha, Mohammad etc. etc. and their teachings.

Then just like the question posed by the practical Vedanta as preached by Swami Vivekananda, to the Quakers also: "the practical question remains, of how the universal ministry is to be changed from a slogan into a practical reality. How is the idea to achieve embodiment? How in sober practice is the priesthood of every believer to be actualised? Certainly it does not come to pass by means of an announcement. The task of actualization is really a difficult one and success is only approximated at best. It will not do itself: it will not be done unless there are people who are willing and able to work at it relentlessly and patiently." This idea and the emphasis is very much like the practical Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda.

So to a common man there now exists two classifications of people based on the conception of (a) realization and (b) actualization. However incompatible they may appear to be on the surface if one goes deep and

according to the right understanding there is no difference since actualisation is by itself a kind of realization and realization too is not bereft of actualization. And most surprisingly "the Quakers simply do not believe that the classifications of clergy and laity together exhaust the possibility", as is the true belief in the Indian tradition, specially Hindu tradition. For a Hindu there are only two classifications—clergy and laity; but for a Quaker; "there is a third class, which is an alternative to either that of layman or that of clergyman. It is made up of persons who claim neither clerical status nor special privilege and who certainly are not marked by any distinctive garb or addressed by any special title, but nevertheless are deeply involved in the ministry because they are seeking to equip others for their own ministry." This conception of a class of people with such noble notions of neutral, universal and equal position is very similar to that of Swami Vivekananda, who rightly proclaimed that the first mission of Vedanta was to do away with all types of privileges. But there is much difficulty in practical life to translate this ideal of a neutral class. Although it is said and also expected that a minister is fundamentally a servant of the people but in actuality it is the opposite. It is very common to see such people attempting and in most of the cases succeeding in wrenching out powers and privileges of others and completely ignoring to note the shortcomings and drawbacks in themselves, in other words 'never calling attention to himself' not even trying to become aware and watch out their own defects and deviations. Perhaps it is so.

in the very nature of all religious institutions, a fact which cannot be forgotten or forgiven by the laity. Perhaps there will be always a general tendency not only to enjoy the privileges to the greatest extent but also to misuse them when an opportunity comes and as such this tendency will overweigh any such moral or spiritual prohibitions.

It is said that George Fox never ceased talking about 'work'. He told his friends and followers: "Spread among your brothers everywhere the religion of life.....Teach them that there is in the whole world but a single temple - the heart of man. It is here, and not in a heaven above or in a steeple house below, that you will find the holy habitation of God... God dwells in the human heart, in every human heart. For in the divine scales of mercy, all men are equal....." (Living Biographies of Religious leaders, page 213) Following their Masters words, the Quakers also sought to recognise, some sort of 'ministry of plumbers and carpenters and housewives, but on the otherhand, we are blind indeed if we fail to recognise the ministry of those who are especially able to teach and to develop the powers of these other members" of society. May be Quakers or Christians could do something like that; but it is unfortunate that in the Ramakrishna Order, nothing on these lines has been achieved inspite of Swami Vivekananda visualizing an unique and special type of ministry for each section of the populace, for village people, in science, agriculture, industries etc. He was even interested in the field of technology, arts and crafts somewhat like the Quakers. No doubt Ramakrishna Order

has ventured into some of the abovementioned fields - mainly in agriculture and small scale village industries but it has not yet reached any extensive and spectacular heights.

It is also a fact that people to a certain extent have not been over enthusiastic in adopting a newer pattern of life for it is said that even with the Quakers also; "The modern pastoral system when it has been most conscious of its heritage, and has resisted acceptance of a conventional clerical pattern has been essentially a logical development of what Fox instituted so effectively in 1673." In fact Fox himself worked regularly and assiduously in his shoe-trade, but after he became a travelling preacher, he could no longer do justice to his trade and had to give it up later. So naturally everybody felt the necessity of equipping oneself with some trade like Fox, so that one can belong to an universal ministry which was very much lacking amongst the Quakers at that time. Subsequently some kind of payment system was introduced, may be just to keep such a minister free from any financial worry and burden. Ofcourse for wealthy and well to-do men like Penn and Barclay such a kind of subsidization was not necessary at all since they were rich or had the wherewithal to go in their chosen path. However, slowly the Quaker movement grew into another system of denomination, fulfilling most of the functions of the Church (exactly like other denominations) and thereby swerving away from their radical spiritual revolution which in fact was the reason for starting such a movement. There is nothing strange in such a happening. This happens very commonly

to most of the movements. Most of them who had originally blazed out with revolutionary notions for changing the existing system after sometime are cast into the conventional mould once again.

So Quaker Movement was no exception to this phenomenon, though it neither accepted nor rejected the pastoral system, in order to pave the way for an Order as a *via media*, a ground-based philosophy the need for which was felt by one and all. Whereas in the case of Ramakrishna Movement building up of such a philosophy and raising to its edifice height by the Ramakrishnaites was not so difficult since a strong and broad foundation was already laid by Swami Vivekananda and others who followed him immediately. Still it is the opinion of some people that inspite of its growing activities and popularity the Ramakrishna Movement is also slowly falling into some sort of rut with its present conventional approach like any other sister denominations and many religious organisations. They say it looks as if it has lost its original valour and dynamic brightness of ideas and colour.

Why does a movement which started with such lofty dreams, "with the conviction that new horizons, new dimensions, new worlds lie waiting to be discovered by the thinking and the believing human mind: (Ibid, P. 219) starts stagnating and gets putrified? According to Trueblood; "One of the reasons why attendance at Theological seminaries is reduced today is the widespread rejection, specially on the part of the idealistic youngmen of the clerical image as they

have observed it. They can easily see that clergymen are almost forced, by the pressures of the lay members of the churches into utterly false positions. They are expected to be officially religious men.....giving the address of welcome and being accorded an ambiguous honour in return. They are called 'men of cloth'....In short they become the official holymen of the community unless they make almost super human efforts to reject such a role." But it is also true that such roles sap out the radical spirit and dynamism from anybody or organisation excepting the priestly class who might enjoy such a role even.

Barclay has expressed in his book 'APOLOGY' that; "We do believe and affirm that some are more particularly called to the work of the ministry and therefore are fitted of the Lord for that purpose: (like a true representative of Sri Ramakrishna - as Swami Vivekananda' exhorted and expected his monastic brothers too, to behave); whose work is more constantly and particularly to instruct, exhort, admonish, oversee and watch over their brethern: and that.....there is something more incumbent upon them in that respect than upon every common believer."

It is well known that like the Quakers, Ramakrishna Movement also began itself by rejecting all old patterns and thinking. But according to Trueblood who when commenting on the Quakers said: "No fire burns unless someone gathers the sticks and does the enkindling, as well as replenishing. Gradually it is observed that Quakerism's most original single contribution to practical Christianity, is not and dare

not be, the private possession of those who happen to be called Quakers." May be, this monopolisation, makes it a brand or type, slowly stagnating into a priestcraft or a denomination only.

III

Like each and every person who desires to walk on the path of spirituality, must have an 'ISHTA' (hero) of his/her own, similarly every movement specially in the religious order there must be always some centre-personality, model or paradigm whatever name one may choose to call it. Swami Vivekananda described an 'ISHTA' as: "...there is that most wonderful theory of 'ISHTA' which gives you the fullest and the freest choice possible among these great religious personalities. You may take up any one of the prophets or teachers as your guide and the object of your special adoration: you are even allowed to think that he whom you have chosen is the greatest of all the prophets, greatest of all the Avatars: there is no harm in that, but you must keep on a firm background of eternally true principles...." (Selections from Works of Vivekananda, page 201) In Quakers language, it was called the 'LIGHT'. But to the Quakers this 'light' was nothing but Jesus Christ. To the Ramakrishnite this light or 'ISHTA' was Sri Ramakrishna Himself, and to many of these Ramakrishnites, Ramakrishna Movement is nothing but an exercise to follow the life of Sri Ramakrishna and His teachings. Broadly speaking, Quakers also can be said to have claimed that their's is 'CHRISTIANITY WRIT PLAIN' It is also true that

some of them ofcourse claimed that Quakers's aim was something akin to 'Primitive Christianity Revived'. Strangely enough in the Ramakrishna Order also, there was some sort of attempt by Swami Vivekananda for the revival of the glorious Aryanism of the past. No doubt both the Quakers and Swami Vivekananda would have liked that such a revival should not be a mere mechanical reproduction of the history of the past but there should be ample scope for development, ofcourse more or less consistent with the past. And like the Ramakrishna Order, Quakers also "never had creed as something to be repeated or as a standard of admission to membership."

Quakers also shared the same kind of conviction like that of the Ramakrishnites when it came to the notions between finite human individual and the living god - 'I - Thou', which is very much in vogue in the sadhana of the Ramakrishna Order too. Here too, since the Ramakrishnites follow it as a relationship - it is little more 'personal' and theistic than in the general Upanishadic tradition of the past. The purpose of the upanishad, atleast the main thrust of it was to pull towards the impersonal and organised, the individual in terms of 'principles'. Thus, here in this respect, Quakers too mixed up the Prophet (Christ) with the scriptures. Actually, it is not very clear as to what are their experiences which can be regarded as message from it directly.

Quakers also believed that true religion must be genuinely experiential. That is also exactly what Sri

Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda claimed as realization - an individual experience. For example, with the Quakers, 'TRINITY' is a word which is not found in the Bible, although the experiential basis of the doctrine has usually been recognised. According to Hindu philosophy by 'TRINITY' it is usually meant that God, who is in one sense, ONE, has been revealed in a variety of ways. According to Swami Vivekananda: "In reality the conception of the Trinity was a great advance over the dualistic idea of Jehovah, who was forever separate from man. The theory of incarnation is the first link in the chain of ideas leading to the recognition of the oneness of God and man. God appearing first in one human form, then reappearing at different times in other human forms, is at last recognised as being in every human being or in all men. Monistic is the highest stage, monitheistic is a lower stage." (Ibid page 412). According to Ramakrishnaites, this Trinity has been applied also in the Oneness of (1) Sri Ramakrishna, (2) Sri Sri Sarada Devi and (3) Swami Vivekananda - they are one and the same reality beyond, without ofcourse much explanation about it.

However, to the Quakers, it must have appeared slightly confusing, since according to them: "No thoughtf!! individual supposes that Divine personality is identical with human personality, but that is no reason for denying Divine personality because the alternative is impersonality, which is manifestly less satisfactory. Indeed it is probable that we are only feebly or partially personal, whereas God is wholly personal."

Elaborating on the subject we find Swami Vivekananda saying: 'Ishvara is the sum total of individuals, yet he is an individual, as the human body is a unit of which each cell is an individual. 'SAMASTHI' or collected equals God, 'VYASTI' or analysed equals the Jiva. The existence of Ishvara therefore depends on that of Jiva, as the body on the cell, and vice versa.

Thus Jiva and Ishvara are co-existent beings: "when one exists, the other must. Also because, except on our earth, in all the higher spheres, the amount of good being vastly in excess of the amount of evil, the sum total (ISHVARA) may be said to be all good. Omnipotent and omniscient are the obvious qualities and need no argument to prove from the very fact of Totality. Brahman is beyond both these and is not a conditioned state....." (ISHVARA & BRAHMAN, Complete Works V page 269) Interestingly in the Ramakrishna Order - God (ISHWARA) as 'seed' or 'light' is also accepted, like the Quakers; and it is not altogether Vedantic that way, devoid of Ishvara, atleast philosophically.

Thus like the Quakers somewhat, Ramakrishnaites can also be said not that much committed to subjective-Vedanta, with too much stress on mysticism, which even the Quakers warned as to being lazy-mysticism and prone to some anarchial chaos of the type of hereticism. Swami Vivekananda was also not very happy with the idea of mysticism for he has once remarked: "The end and aim of all science is to find the unity, the ONE out of which the manifold is being manufactured, that ONE existing as many.

Raja-Yoga proposes to start from the internal world, to study internal nature, and through that, control the whole - both internal and external. It is a very old attempt. India has been its special stronghold, but it was also attempted by other nations. In Western countries it was regarded as mysticism and people who wanted to practise it were either burned or killed as witches and sorcerers. In India, for various reasons, it fell into the hands of persons who destroyed ninety percent of the knowledge, and tried to make a great secret of the remainder. In modern times many so-called teachers have arisen in the West worse than those of India, because the latter knew something, while the modern exponents know nothing." (SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S SELECTION OF WORKS, page 134).

Both the Quakers and the Ramakrishnaite sought to keep themselves in touch with the tradition of atleast some theistic-pattern and objective values and were infact kept up as the basis, side by side with the newer conceptions. Just like Vivekananda's idea of 'man' - this stress of the Quakers was also likely to be confused as sterile-humanism, having nothing to do with God and Faith in religion. It is said that George Fox the founder of Quaker Movement was "determined, if possible, to steer the world from 'the waters of death into the waters of life' and went to the priests, who pretended to know the ways of God and the wants of men and asked them to help him in his quest: they only made fun of him and suggested that he get married or become a

soldier or start taking a 'physic' or start smoking of tobacco or singing of psalms."

Although both the Movements believed in the idea of the presence of God in everyman: it was not very much known and appreciated in the Quaker Movement till George Fox on his death-bed pleaded with his friends to: "Spread among your brothers everywhere the religion of life.....Teach them that there is in the whole world but a single temple - the heart of man. It is here, and not in a haven above or in a steeplehouse below, that you will find the holy habitation of God....God dwells in the human heart, in every heart. For in the divine scales of mercy, all men are equal." (Religious Biographies of Religious leaders, page 213).

From the above, it is clear that like Swami Vivekananda, George Fox believed in the idea of the availability of God's grace for all, for God reaches out to each and every type of person. This universality of God's love and His pardon to each and everyone irrespective of his/her action is not very much accepted by Vedanta; however since Quaker Movement was largely meant for Christians it seems to make perfect sense that this kind of saving light, rather grace, that is wholly divine comes to such men who do not even deserve it. With Vedanta it was much more restricted but at the same time much more glorified no doubt.

One becomes more and more aware of this when one ponders upon the solution provided by Barclay when he states:"...that God, who out of his infinite love sent his son,

the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world, who tasted death for every man, hath given to every man whether Jew or Gentile Turk or Scythian, Indian or Barbarian, of whatsoever nation, country or place, a certain day or time of visitation; during which day or time it is possible for them to be saved, and to partake of the fruit of Christ's death." Undoubtedly Ramakrishnaism is much more universal in outlook than such Catholic idea of the Christianity and never this much theistic and personal as to restrict salvation theory to any particular God or Goddess. Infact Sri Ramakrishna used to illustrate this point with a very good example: "There are several bathing ghats in a large tank. Whoever goes to whichever ghat he pleases to take a bath or to fill his vessel reaches the water, and it is useless to quarrel with one another claiming one's ghat to be better than another's. Similarly, there are many ghats that lead to the water of the fountain of Eternal Bliss. Every religion of the world is one ghat. Go direct with a sincere and earnest heart through any one of these ghats, and you shall reach the water of Eternal Bliss. But say not that your religion is better than that of another." (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, page 131).

No doubt at a later date amongst the Quakers too the idea of an eternal-Christ, reaching a Buddhistic heart was also ingeniously interpreted, with a stress on the idea of particular historic Christ, none can afford to miss!

The Quakers also felt that without being too orthodox to the scriptural tradition (like the notion of Sri Ramakrishna also) that: "It is possible to be deeply appreciative of the

scriptures without being bound by them." How this can be achieved is told by Swami Vivekananda when he says: "The idea is that we have to get our knowledge of ordinary objects by direct perception, and by inference therefrom, and from the testimony of people who are competent. By 'people who are competent' the Yogi always means the Rishis, or the Seers of the thoughts recorded in the scriptures - the Vedas. According to them, the only proof of the scriptures is that they were the testimony of competent persons, yet they say the scriptures cannot take us to realization. We can read all the Vedas, and yet will not realise anything, but when we practice their teachings, then we attain to that state which realises what the scriptures say, which penetrate where neither reason nor perception nor inference can go, and where the testimony of others cannot avail. This is what is meant by the aphorism." (Swami Vivekananda's Selection of Works, page 232).

At the same time Quakers were quick to admit:..."that the authors of the Bible could be mistaken and that the infallibility of the church or Pope could not be given an adequate defense, but they were not equally alert to the possibility of error in reference to the leading of the Spirit, on which they depended." This remark is indeed a very mild stricture that goes against them! On the otherhand Barclay's plea that;" the direct leading of the Spirit ought not to be subjected to reason or anything else as a mere sure touchstone, because that would mean testing the greater by the lesser" - can be put at par with Ramakrishna's attaching

great importance to direct spiritual experience beyond all reason. And the concept of 'touchstone' was also very much known to them.

Quakers as well as Ramakrishnaites believed in general that truth is objective but judgement about it is necessarily subjective. That this is so, is somewhat proved by the fact that Sri Ramakrishna as well as many of the Quakers could not tolerate the restriction imposed by clothing. It is reported that several of the Quakers preferred to move about completely naked in the streets without the slightest inhibitions. It was not an uncommon sight to find Sri Ramakrishna moving about completely naked but carrying his few clothes under his arm. It is also said that he could not even tolerate to keep on his body the 'sacred thread' and used to take it away whenever he used to sit for sadhana thereby inviting the wrath of his nephew Hriday on many an occasion. Trueblood has commented as to these kinds of direct spiritual experiences that: "This practice, undertaken as a prophetic sign of nakedness of the prevailing culture, was more frequent in the early days than has been commonly recognised."

IV

"Worship is constant remembering as may be seen from the essential texts of scriptures" declared Swami Vivekananda. Quakers' approach to worship even though it varied from group to group mainly due to the developments in the communities brought about by the need and stress for the same was one of acceptance of this patch-work-quilt

approach even within their own religious communities -
"..worship, according to the ancient practice of the Religious Society of Friends, is entirely without any human direction or supervision. A group of devout persons come together and sit down quietly with no pre-arrangement, each seeking to have an immediate sense of divine leading and to know at first hand the presence of the Living Christ." So also were the sittings with Sri Ramakrishna who used to sit on a small cot in one of the rooms facing the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar and his disciples used to sit round him on the ground and everybody was free to talk and ask questions. The Master used to joke, tell stories, sing or even dance in divine ecstasy with his devotees. People from various parts of the country following various religions would come and the Master welcomed them all for he believed that;" ..He who feels thirsty does not discard the water of the river merely because it is muddy, nor does he begin to dig a well to find clear water. So he who feels real spiritual thirst does not discard the religion near at hand, be it Hinduism or any other, nor does he create a new religion for himself. A really thirsty man has no time for such deliberations." (SAYINGS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA, page 165) Now in the Ramakrishna Movement a living Sri Ramakrishna is felt, otherwise, the fact about worship is almost the same as it was with the Quakers. For instance amongst the Quakers there was not any elaborate advance preparation to speak or discuss or to keep silent almost like in the place of worship in the Ramakrishna Movement, where a spontaneous silence is maintained voluntarily by the devotees and at the same time.

the same place witnesses great joy and community singing while celebrating certain festivals etc. etc. Like the Quakers Ramakrishnaites also are: "not dependent upon a priest or his blessing: they were not bound by any words: they were not bound to silence either. They simply gathered, listened, waited and sought to be obedient." Ofcourse with the advance of time and circumstances formal worship and dependence etc. are likely to intrude upon this old sense of worship which is rather sad to note.

So generally speaking one finds two types of worship - (1) KARMA or Dynamic worship of service and (2) the other one is silent and formal approach to worship i.e. worship on the basis of silence and holy obedience. A Quaker, Caroline Stephen has rightly pointed out the naturalness of the way of worship which can be very well compared with the type of worship Sri Ramakrishna preferred - avoiding Vaidhi bhakti and the formal sense of guiding the mind (manas) through the ritual somewhat internally prepared and offered to God, than any ostentatious and formal external paraphernalia of it. She said, "Utterance I know was free (not formal or mantric utterance, which is purely ritualistic in nature) should the words be given; and before the meeting was over, a sentence or two were uttered in great simplicity by an old and apparently untaught man, rising in his place amongst the rest of us. I do not pay much attention to the word he spoke and I have no recollection of their purport. My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God - with the

sense that atleast I had found a place where I might without the faintest suspicion of sincerty join with others in simply seeking HIS presence." (QUAKER STRONGHOLDS, 1911)

Sri Ramakrishna although agreed that formal worship, rituals and glorification of attributes of a personal God are necessary, till the person reached a certain level of spirituality his preference was to love God, to cry for God. He often used to say and plea with his devotees to; "cry to the Lord with an intensely yearning heart and you will certainly see HIM. People shed a whole jug of tears for wife and children. They swim in tears for money. But who weeps for God? Cry to HIM with a real cry."

The fact that "...a man who knew not letters, had the highest knowledge, for he had pure love for God and could realize HIM" was often stressed by Sri Ramakrishna and illustrated by a fable: "In the course of his piligrimage through the southern parts of India, Sri Chaitanya Deva came across a certain devotee who was in tears all the while a pundit was reading from the Gita. Now this devotee knew not even a single word of the Gita. On being asked why he shed tears, he replied: "It is indeed true that I do not know a word of the Gita. But all the while it was being read, I could not help seeing with my inner eye the beautiful form of my Lord Sri Krishna seated before Arjuna in a chariot in the field of Kurukshetra, and giving out all those sublime thoughts embodied in the Gita. This it was that filled my eyes with tears of joy and love." (Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna, page 115). He also used to refer to the simple

village folk who used to associate themselves so much with the characters in a drama enacted during festivals and fairs and would laugh or cry as the characters did sometimes even not understanding the meaning of the flowery language spoken by the characters. But they could visualize the character enacted, specially divine characters from epics and could feel the presence of such divine personalities. After all the main purpose of listening to any spiritual or religious talk or discourse is to go beyond this mundane life, visualise the presence of God and to concentrate on It.

There was a time when monks belonging to Ramakrishna Order used to prefer spontaneous talk and natural discussions even with the household devotee rather than any formal and prepared highly intellectual version of preaching. Possibly this emphasis on informality, heart to heart talk now has gone or is slowly going out of practice. Swami Kailasanandaji once told some of us how even a fluent and magnificent speaker of the calibre of Swami Sarvanandaji used to feel that the effect of a speech that came out spontaneously from the heart was much more touching than a speech which was highly intellectual and prepared beforehand. Another monk who was present at a celebration in connection with Holy Mother's Centenary described how at a certain moment the same Swamiji highly charged with emotion got excited and spoke to a big gathering touching their heart with his speech that there was not a dry eye at the conclusion of his talk. All the speeches

and lectures delivered by highly learned men who also addressed the same gathering paled into insignificance before this one speech.

Caroline Stephen too is of the same opinion since she has clearly remarked: "Our (Quaker) manner of worship is the natural result of the full recognition of the reality of Divine inspiration - of the actual living present with sufficient fulness of intercast between the human spirit and HIM who is the Father of the spirits." Otherwise formal speeches are likely to be mechanical and dry like the sanskrit mantras uttered by a priest at some Hindu religious function or like the lectures of a Christian Missionary priest. Simplicity and sincerity and not formality should be the guiding principle of all successful preachings. The Apostles of Sri Ramakrishna could invoke a spirit of this living presence of God, by their simplicity and sincere approach to life and austere living. Sri Ramakrishna was very particular as to who can preach and who should not! He once said smiling: "Preaching? It is only man's vanity that makes him think of preaching. A man is but an insignificant creature. It is God alone who will preach - God who has created the sun and moon and so illumined the universe. Is preaching such a trifling affair? You cannot preach unless God reveals Himself to you and gives you the command to preach. Ofcourse, no one can stop you from preaching. You haven't received the command, but still you cry yourself hoarse. People will listen to you a couple of days and then forget all about it. It is like any other sensation; as long as you speak, people will say,

'Ah! He speaks well: and the moment you stop, everything will disappear." (Gospel, page 668).

Caroline too referred to such a quality amongst the Quaker - worship and preaching when she said; "I yet must avow my own conviction that avowal ideal of public worship of the purest which has ever been recognised, and also that it is practically identical with that which seems to have been recognized in the days of the Apostles (Christ's)."

Further, it is also said; "The early Christians, many of whom had had a background of synagogue worship, from them they had consciously departed, seem to have gathered in the simplest possible way, and with the complete absence of any pre-arranged pattern..." We are also told that Colossians 3:16 mentions, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Further it is also that, "...there is not even a suggestion that there is one efficient incharge or that participation is limited to a special ecclesiastical order." Paul said it seems, "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation." (1. Cor. 14:26)

But the question arises as how to find a uniformity and discipline then? May be the answer will be too individualistic for such a vast subject as spirituality. What is the necessity, at all of becoming too uniform and disciplined at the cost of natural divergencies and variety? If one takes the example

of Sri Ramakrishna, it will be found that he had great respect for all religions, not only that, he came to this conclusion after practising all these religions. It is said that; ".....subsequently he practised the instructions of Christianity and Islam and arrived at the same conclusion. Thus he demonstrated by his own life and inner experience the Truth of his forefathers as laid down in the Vedas: 'Reality of ONE: Sages call It by various names'. Sri Ramakrishna also used to say in his own simple and inimitable way; "Different opinions are but different paths, and the goal is one and the same," (TALES & PARABLES OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA, Introduction page XXXII). As William Penn and others have pointed out that there is always a great loss when religious expressions become the monopoly of a professional caste, group or coterie. "Early Christianity, whatever else it was, was certainly a tumultuous affair, with all men involved in the act and without any limiting stereotype."

What "God, Sri Ramakrishna has taught us, is not the monopoly of and religion or creed, but the common property of all; He is the loving Father of mankind. He is not only an extra cosmic Being, but HE permeates the entire universe as intelligence and consciousness. HE is present everywhere, from the blade of grass to Brahma as the inmost essence of all. HE is the Life and Substratum of all entities, from the atom to the highest Prophet. The same infinite expanse of water forms the basis of the froth, bubbles and mountain-high waves. The difference between man and man, and between other animate and inanimate objects, lies

in the degree of divine manifestation. When God is involved, HE is the grain of sand, and when HE is fully evolved HE is Jesus Christ. Through our strivings and our struggles we are approaching the Central Truth. Art, Science and Religion are but different expressions of Truth. But one can understand it only when one has realised the Unity of Existence." (Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna, page XXXVII)

Somewhat akin to the Quakers, Sri Ramakrishna was also opposed to all stereotyped worship, rituals and thinking. Yet taking into consideration the social and religious conditions prevailing at that time, he had to, to a certain extent adhere to worship and rituals of some kind. In the beginning he too had to put up with the routine of prayers, worship and so-called meditation in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar since he had no alternative. A Brahmin and that too a priest is expected to wear the sacred thread always; however when the Master was the priest at the Kali temple and used to go to the jungle to meditate he used to 'put off his cloth and the sacred thread and was sitting at ease in meditation'. When asked how he could discard the sacred thread he replied: "...what do you know? Thus freed from all ties, one should practise meditation. From his birth man labours under the eight bondages of hatred, fear, shame, aversion, egoism, vanity, pride of noble descent and obsession with formal good conduct. The sacred thread also is a 'bondage': for it is a sign of the sense of self-importance, 'I am a Brahmana and superior to all'. When one calls on Mother, one should discard these bondages and call on Her

with a concentrated mind. That is why I have put off these. I shall put them on again when I return at the end of the meditation." (Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, page 158)

May be this following of certain procedures and rituals exists in most of the religions and may be they are also necessary to certain category of devotees and in the beginning of sadhana. Perhaps the church as an organisation had very little alternative to them as is seen in the later days of Quaker Movement. May be here lies the crux, rather the secret why all creativity is slowly slipping away from these organisations. Even at that time, Sri Ramakrishna must have noticed this trend specially in the Brahmo Samaj prayers which he sometimes attended. His puns and remarks in this context are quite interesting such as once when it was dark one of the Brahmo devotees said to the Master: "Perhaps it is time for your evening devotions" immediately the Master replied: "NO, it isn't exactly that. One should pass through these disciplines in the beginning Later one doesn't need the rituals of formal worship or to follow the injunctions." Again speaking about the Navavidhan or the New Dispensation of Keshab Chandra Sen he remarked: "Some say it is a modern thing. That set me wondering: 'Then is the God of the Brahmo Samaj a new God?' The Brahmos speak of their God as the Navavidhan, as a New Dispensation. Well it may be so. Who knows? There are six systems of philosophy, so perhaps it is like one of these." (Ibid page 191).

There seems to exist a strong conviction both in the Quaker Movement and Sri Ramakrishna Movement about the suitability of meeting and praying together. Barclay of the Quaker Movement "tells us clearly why it is necessary for people to meet together. Obviously it is possible for individuals to pray alone, and we are commanded by Christ to do so: (Matt:6:6) but the experience of being together is wholly a different one, and equally necessary...." And 'to meet together' wrote Barclay, "we think necessary for the people of God; because, so long as we are clothed with this outward tabernacle, there is a necessity to the entertaining of a joint and visible fellowship, and bearing of an outward testimony for God, and seeing of the faces of one another." For angels we are not and the finest figure of speech we can employ to explain the need we have for each other is that of the 'burning logs or coals' - in Remington's language, "....they are like a heap of fresh and burning coals warring one another, as a great strength, freshness and vigour of life flows into all."

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, his disciples "were like men in a shipwreck. But a strong bond of love held them together and they found assurance and courage in each other's company, They could not enjoy the friendship of worldly people and would talk only of their Master.....The young unmarried disciples of the Master, who belonged to his inner circle, had attended on him day and night at the Cossipore garden house ...returned to their families against their own wills. He himself had initiated

several of them into the monastic life, giving them the ochre cloths of sannyasis. Two or three of the Master's attendants had no place to go. To them the large-hearted Surendra said: 'Brothers, where will you go? Let us rent a house. You will live there and make it our Master's shrine and we house-holders shall come there for consolation. How can we pass all our days and nights with our wives and children in the world.' Accordingly he rented a house for them at Baranagore, in the suburbs of Calcutta and this place became gradually transformed into a math or monastery." (Gospel, page 975) This happened to be the nucleus of the later famous RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION.

Barclay in another instance talks about the advantage of being together: "As iron sharpeneth iron, the seeing of the faces of one of another, when both are inwardly gathered unto the life, giveth occasion for the life secretly to arise and pass from vessel to vessel. And as many candles lighted, and put in one place do greatly augment the light and make it more and more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together in to the same light, there is more of the glory of God, and His power appears, to the refreshment of the each individual: for that he partakes not only the light and life raised in himself but in all the rest."

Swami Vivekananda although he understood the preference that Hindus had to be alone in their Sadhanas he also appreciated the attitude of Christians in community prayers, so he went to the extent of emphasising the utility of collective and congregational prayers over the age-old

individual method to which many still clinged too much, with the result that Latu Maharaj (Swami Adbhutanandaji) who commanded much love from Swami Vivekananda was in a dilemma as to whether to follow the old system or the method introduced by Swamiji of praying together according to some prescribed routine and programme. Even during the Vedic and Upanishadic era also such practice of group chanting, singing of prayers and meditation must have been there. Sri Ramakrishna also was very fond of music and singing. Swami Saradananda narrates in his book 'SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE GREAT MASTER', how from early boyhood Sri Ramakrishna was fond of singing: "Besides the Ramayana, the Mahabharata there still exist in Kamarpukur records containing the stories of gods and goddess written in simple verses by the village poets well known in those parts. Narratives on the revelations of the great god Tarakesvar; the musical composition relating to Yogadya; and songs of Madanmohan of Vanavishnupur, describing gods and goddesses revealing their true nature to holy men and devotees and performing super-natural deeds - these reached Gadadhar's (Sri Ramakrishna) ears from time to time. With the help of his extraordinary memory, the boy learnt by heart many of these poetical compositions by merely listening to their recitation and would sometimes himself copy any available manuscript or book containing them. We came to know of this when we found, on investigation at the Kamarpukur house, a manuscript of RAMAKRISHNAYAMA, the musical compositions on Yogadya and Subahu, copied by Gadadhar himself. It is also

beyond doubt that many a time the boy read and recited these narratives to the simple-hearted men and women of the village, whenever they requested him to do so" (Page 67). Again we are told in the Gospel (page 111): "....Kedar was very happy that day having arranged a religious festival for Sri Ramakrishna. A singer had been hired by Ram, and the whole day passed in joy.....The Master was highly pleased with the ostad's music. He said to the musician: 'There is a special manifestation of God's power in a man who has any outstanding gift, such as proficiency in music.' "Swami Vivekananda was also very fond of music and he declared: "Music is the highest art and to those who understood, is the highest worship" Sri Ramakrishna also used to love to hear songs sung by Swamiji and once the Master went into ecstasy while listening to the khol(drum) played by Raicharan Das of Krishnaganj!

Hinduism gives great importance to holy company and the get-together of devotees with a single pointed desire to come closer to the Lord. Emphasising on a central experience of holy- dependence Barclay vividly describes in an autobiographical manner:"....when people gathered thus together, not merely to hear men, nor depend upon them, but all are inwardly taught to stay their minds upon the Lord, and wait for His appearance in their hearts; thereby the forward working of the spirit of man is stayed and hindered from mixing itself with the worship of God: and the form of this worship is so naked and void of all outward and worldly splendour, that all occasions for man's wisdom is to be

exercised in that superstition and idolatry hath no lodging here; and so there being also an inward quietness and retiredness of mind, the witness of God ariseth, whereby the soul cometh to see its condition. And there being many joined together in this same work, there is an inward travail and wrestling also, as the measure of Grace is abode in, and overcoming of the power and the spirit of darkness; and thus we are often greatly strengthened and renewed in the spirit of our minds without a word."

According to Swami Vivekananda: "if you want to be a Yogi, you must be free and place yourself in circumstances where you are alone and free from all anxiety. He who desires a comfortable and nice life and at the same time wants to realise the Self is like the fool who wanting to cross the river, caught hold of a crocodile, mistaking it for a log of wood. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and everything shall be added unto you.' This is one great duty, this is renunciation. Live for an ideal, and leave no place in the mind for anything else. Let us put forth all our energies to acquire that which never fails - our spiritual perfection. If we have true yearning for realisation, we must struggle, and through struggle growth will come. We shall make mistakes, but they be angels unawares. The greatest help to spiritual life is meditation (DHYANA). In meditation we divest ourselves of all material conditions and feel our divine nature. We do not depend upon any external help in meditation. The touch of the soul can paint the highest colour even in the dingiest places: it can cast a fragrance over the

vilest thing: it can make the wicked divine - and all enmity, all selfishness is effaced. The less the thought of the body, the better. For it is the body that drags us down. It is attachment, identification, which makes us miserable. That is the secret; to think that I am the Spirit and not the body, and that whole of this universe with all its relations, with all its good and all its evil, is but as a series of paintings, scenes on canvas, of which I am the witness." (Selections from Works of Vivekananda, page 80).

Regarding the attitude of a Quaker towards the significance of keeping silence it is said: "It is, indeed, a fact that though individual silence is common, group silence is extremely rare. In most human gatherings, because silence is embarrassing, frantic efforts are made to keep up a stream of words when they are inane." To a certain extent Quakers were able to check this over- vocal culture. On the other hand, we in India seem to be over-fond of noise: now-a-days we find everywhere there is plenty of noise whether it is religious gatherings, festivals, social celebrations, birth, marriage or death ceremonies: noise blares through microphones even in the remotest Himalayan villages. This is becoming too much. No doubt Swami Vivekananda wanted to create 'noise' but what he meant by 'noise' is not 'sound' but a 'voice' and by 'voice' he meant 'message', message of some great and inspiring aspects of life. Vivekananda was himself a world famous orator, yet he wanted 'silence' and craved for it and very often he used to express eagerly for a quiet life and retirement in the bosom

of the great Himalayas. The present day sadhus seem to be in favour of noisy celebrations and crowded festivals and marathon spiritual talks specially in local languages.

However, in the Ramakrishna Order still there is some moderation and they are almost in line with the Quakers in favour of 'silence': still they believe that;" ...there is great merit in keeping still when one does not have something valuable to say." It is a wrong notion, although universally believed that learned and cultured people alone prefer 'silence'. "The whole of the Quaker experience gives abundant evidence that it can be learned by all kinds and conditions of men, including those of low degrees of learning."

Ramakrishnaism on the other hand attracted all classes of people but mostly mediocre, not the highly scholastic group and the rich class nor those at the grass-root culture. Actually what happened exactly to the Quaker Movement in this regard is very difficult to judge at this distance of time and history. But that Barclay never meant mediocrity, is clear from the fact that he insisted upon neither creative silence i.e. mere abstaining from the words, like the mouni Jains and even adopted for sometime by Gandhiji, which is more or less outward, nor perhaps too much of thoughts, imaginations and desires. He was in favour of a middle path and certainly not mediocrity. May be this was the real motive in the Ramakrishna Movement too for like many of these Ramakrishnaites, Quakers too believed that the real encounter with the living God comes

best when one ceases to try and is simply willing to wait. Surely, "It is foolish for us to dominate the conversation by continued silent talking when what we really need is the willingness to listen and thus to learn. This relevance of this is contemporary." As against the cacophany of radio and television, a much more meaningful silence is required than mere silence of the lips or absence of words. So it must be an open silence, relaxing and soothing than merely the type of forced, imposed silence as visualised in the olden days: that is to say, that there should be no slavish adherence to any fixed pattern or way. Upanishads say 'Maunum Brahma' but there is also the danger of ones feelings and emotions getting bottled-up due to this strict adherence to 'silence', which is better avoided in the interest of all.

Some of the observations made by Quakers are so significant and worth following by all religious and spiritual movements including Ramakrishna Movement like when it is said: "If we are led to sing, when some of our ancestors were not so led, this need not indicate a decline and will not automatically be seen as such, except by those who have allowed their adherence to the unprogrammed meeting to become a new idolatry. If there are some who believe more in an unprogrammed form of worship than they believe in God's leading, this is a disease which can be cured by wider experience and by most honest thinking."

Ofcourse it goes to the credit of the Ramakrishna Movement that in keeping pace with the modern trends certain innovations have been introduced: old type of songs

which were hard to understand being more or less classical have been replaced by much more modern and popular light music. Rabindra Sangeet has come into vogue in many places; so also Vedic chanting groups by young boys have come up in most of the centres which were not there some twenty years back. Formerly in the Ramakrishna Movement it was like the "...singing which the earliest Quakers did, and which was nearly absent in the 18th Century, was not congregational singing, as we understand it. Indeed, modern congregational singing, even among the Baptists, did not become a common practice until 1690. The original singing was spontaneous, as it apparently was with the first century Christians."

Music ofcourse was an integral part of Hinduism: some of the Vedas were recited musically and music was encouraged and patronised in the ancient royal courts. Music ofcourse was there with the Brahmo Samaj, which was congregational too. Sri Ramakrishna was a good singer with a sweet voice and was a lover of spontaneous songs sung with great devotion. It is said that while he was the priest at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar: "...as his love for God deepened, he began either to forget or to drop the formalities of worship. Sitting before the image he would spend hours singing the devotional songs of great devotees of the Mother, such as Kamalakanta and Ramprasad. Those rapsodical songs, describing the direct vision of God, only intensified Sri Ramakrishna's longing. He felt the pangs of a child separated from its mother. Sometimes in agony, he

would rub his face against the ground and weep so bitterly that people thought he had lost his earthly mother....." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 13). He used to sing many Vaishnavaitic songs very melodiously at the height of his devotional ecstasy. Vaishnav kirtans can be sung solo/spontaneously or as a collective song. Swami Vivekananda's hymns, specially the Aarati- song was not only congregational, but it had all the depth of an orchestrated modern church choir song with its loud and clear vibration and a bold and open tune. The tradition of music in religion is common everywhere and Quakers were no exception: for confirmation they used to quote the Psalm 100:2 which says: "Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing." And it is but natural and honest; "to admit that it is difficult and probably impossible to bring together in one pattern all of the features which are potent means of worship to all people." No doubt, "there are words and actions (sort of rituals) which are helpful and which many people seem to need as instruments to bring them to the sense of communion with God."

Although both the choir as well as solo music have their respected positions the former requires lot of pre-planning and the co-operation of the whole team, whereas in solo it is spontaneous which means that one can express oneself fully and in a direct manner. It is also truly said that "many are helped to achieve a sense of reality in worship by the singing of a really good choir." Ofcourse, "choral music requires the advance work of a composer, of

a conductor and of many trained voices. This is potentially very good but its goodness is not the kind that is compatible with the rejection of pre-arrangement." Also, it is a fact, "that singing of the Cathedral choir and the worship of God on the basis of Holy Obedience are radically different does not indicate that we need to reject either one. We have many different needs, there is more than one way of being brought to the very gates of heaven. Herein lies the major secret of true ecumenicity." Ramakrishnaism is also well known for its liberal outlook - may it be in the mode of worship, celebration of festivals of not only Hindus but also Christians, Sikhs etc. etc. and also in their philanthropic activities like running of hospitals, schools and employment oriented village centres etc. etc. Even in their day-to-day duties the monks and lay devotees who include prominent doctors, engineers etc. attend to those who are in distress without any caste or class distinction. Their motto is the one given by Swami Vivekananda: "It is the greatest privilege in our life that we are allowed to serve the Lord in all these shapes. For us work is worship" Besides this, purity and simplicity in the worship of the Lord is the hallmark of the Ramakrishna Movement. However care must be taken that this trend of over simplifying of the worship as well as other functions are not taken too far since there is always the danger of too much informality leading to a kind of anarchy which in turn would mean as good as no worship at all. A golden via media between maximum worship and minimum worship has to be struck to arrive at an ideal balance indeed.

With the subject of worship of God is linked the concept of God with form and without form. It is also said that "extreme spirituality makes public worship no longer possible" and Perrot (sometime after 1661) opposed any such public worship, which however was nullified by Fox himself. For Fox was opposed to Perrot's theory of 'REVELATION' and accepted the necessity of some such form of public worship. Fox claimed that: "Christian ideal is not that of the elimination of forms, for, since we are not angels, we require some forms." For Sri Ramakrishna it mattered very little whether one worshipped the God with or without form since he was aware that atleast at the beginning, a person needs something which is bigger, mightier and more powerful than himself/herself worthy of his/her worship. Swami Vivekananda humourously said, to a small cat the big tom-cat of the locality is God. Sri Ramakrishna while discussing whether God has form or is formless told a Brahmo devotee: "No one can say with finality that God is only 'this' and nothing else. He is formless and again He has form. For the bhakta he assumes form. But He is formless for the janni, that is, for him who looks on the worlds as a mere dream. The bhakta feels that he is one entity and the world another. Therefore God reveals Himself to him as a Person. But the jnani, the Vedantist, for instance - always reasons, applying the process of 'neti,' - not this, not this. Through this discrimination he realises, by his inner perception, that the ego and the universe are both illusory, like a dream. Then the Jnani realises Brahman in his own consciousness. He cannot describe what Brahman is

.....It doesn't matter whether you accept God with form or not. It is enough to feel that God is a person who listens to our prayers, who creates, preserves and destroys the universe and who is endowed with infinite powers." (Gospel, page 149).

Recognising that each and everyone cannot become a jnani, Sri Ramakrishna guided majority of his devotees on the Bhakti Marg, that is worship of God with form. "But in the Kaliyuga, man, being totally dependent on food for life, cannot altogether shake off the idea that he is the body. In this state of mind it is not proper for him to say 'I am HE'. When a man does all sorts of worldly things, he should not say 'I am Brahman'. Those who cannot give up attachment to worldly things and who find no means to shake off the feeling of 'I' should rather cherish the idea, 'I am God's servant: I am His devotee'. One can also realize God by following the path of devotion." And for those chosen few whom he found highly spiritual, who had renounced everything and could stand the rigours of severe austerity he recommended the formless God. There are the "...rishis of old (who had) attained the knowledge of Brahman. One cannot have this so long as there is the slightest trace of worldliness. How hard the rishis laboured? Early in the morning they would go away from the hermitage and would spend the whole day in solitude meditating on Brahman. At night they would return to the hermitage and eat a little fruit or roots. They kept their minds aloof from the objects of sight, hearing, touch and other things of a worldly nature. Only

thus did they realize Brahman as their own inner consciousness." (Ibid page 103). Supporting the principle of his Master, Swami Vivekananda also preferred to keep only one or two centres of Ramakrishna Order exclusively for 'formless worship' - one such famous centre is in the lap of the Himalayas at Mayavati. Now, at present, the Ramakrishna Order is dedicating more and more centres for public worship and more temples are coming up, may be to meet the needs of people, since Ramakrishna Movement is gaining more and more popularity. May be also, Swami Vivekananda would not have liked this trend since he was against such perpetual 'Kindergarten system of religion' as he preferred to name them. At the same time he also recognised the need for such systems for the beginners and accepted the idea. Only time will show where the trend will go!

So also Quaker writer Rufus M. Jones accepted this formal-worship as a helpful preparation and says: "The Quaker group-silence, the co-operative team work of the entire assembly, the expectant hush, the sense of divine presence, the faith that God and man can come into mutual and reciprocal correspondence, tend to heighten the spiritual quality of the person who rises in that kind of atmosphere to speak. But that group situation, important as it is, will not work the miracle of producing a message for the hour in a person who is sterile and has nothing to say." Ramakrishna Mission experiencing the same experience today.

While speaking about prayers and worship, the environment in which these are held also assume some importance atleast. Once upon a time the Ramakrishna Movement was more of prayer-hall type than the temple type. Now ofcourse there is a distinct shift which is quite remarkable for it is becoming more and more temple type. Once upon a time the Quakers were also of the same view for it is said: "The ideal seems to be that of a building in which, a minimum of distraction is there, the worshippers can be conscious of one another and so on. After all, it is more in human face than in brick and stone....This is why the auditorium type of building is a mistake." So, "The newer and more creative types of Quaker architecture tend, for this reason, to make it possible for the company of worshippers to arrange themselves in a hollow square."

Worship amongst the Quakers, specially in connection with marriage and death is something very interesting and serious. Whereas in the Ramakrishna Movement there is nothing note-worthy functions or rituals concerning marriage, birth or death, mainly because the movement is not a priestly organisation and is mainly monastic in nature. Yet in recent years, informally offerings are getting more and more accepted in connection with such occasions as birth, marriage and death, here and there, without much official notice. It is further noted also that; "When the pastoral system among the Quakers began nearly a century ago, it soon became possible for recognised Quaker ministers to operate, in regard to

marriage as clergymen and thus to abandon, if they chose to do so, the beautiful and meaningful practice of Quaker marriage which had meant so much for two hundred years." Thus the same type of controversy may and is likely to come in the Ramakrishna Movement also someday inspite of its present monastic defense and intellectual pressure that is brought upon this issue - who knows?

Regarding the disposal of the dead, like the Quakers, the Ramakrishnaitees too believe in simple cremation to simple burial which the Quakers very much insisted upon. Otherwise, many monastic organisations bury their saints and build some formal tomb as a scultural monument to be revered and worshipped later. This happens to be a common practice in Buddhistic, Christian, Islamic and even among many Hindu sampradayas.

V

It is true that Quaker Movement just like Ramakrishna Movement is more misunderstood than understood specially by people who have little knowledge of these two movements nor care to go deep into their philosophies. It is rightly said that "Sometimes when people have only a little knowledge of Quakers are asked how Quakers are distinguished, it is answered that they are peculiar Christians who do not observe the sacraments." Here lies the confusion in the very question, because: "Whatever the truth about the sacraments may be, a description of the Quaker practice in negative terms is gradually inadequate and misleading." Rather, "It would be nearer to truth to say

that Quakers are distinguished by the intensity with which they accept the idea that ours is a sacramental Universe." Perhaps this is also the case with the Ramakrishna Movement, specially in the context of the minority-issue which has been pending in the Supreme Court for many years. On this, many are confused almost in the same manner as the Quakers were and they are also replied in the same manner - by quoting about the same Hindu sacramental world and the policies and practices that are followed by the Ramakrishnaitees.

How George Fox who "was determined, if possible, to steer the world 'from the waters of death into the waters of life'" was misunderstood even by Lord macaulay, is clear when it is pointed out that "One of the major evidences that Lord Macaulay in his famous history was grotesquely unable to understand George Fox, is shown by his treatment of the sacramental issue." It seems with great sarcasm, Macaulay sought to describe that "Fox literally took command of Christ, which nearly all other Christians had taken figuratively, while he allegorized those which others interpreted literally". The points which enraged the feelings of the Quakers and which they denied, atleast denied at one point of time concerned (a) formal baptism into Christianity with water and (b) the point of holy communion formally. No doubt Ramakrishnaism also perhaps followed the same path about formal Hindu sacraments. They accepted informally anyone (including Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and Sikhs) without going into details about their sacramental

beliefs and religious/spiritual practices and these people were able to blend themselves into the movement without any difficulty. May be the Quakers ran into bad weather since they departed from the main stream and this their departure was based on the line of thought that Christ was trying to institute a new world order beyond all such formalities and particularisation of sacraments etc. The views of most of the Ramakrishnaites is also beyond the boundaries of orthodoxy and doctrinal representation of religion. After all what are these sacraments - nothing but some liturgical acts in which a physical entity achieves spiritual significance. It is also true that unlike the Quakers, Ramakrishna Order follows otherwise some of the Hindu sacraments very thoroughly excepting perhaps the Brahminical orthodoxy.

While explaining this aspect about the Quakers, it is observed that, ".....though Christ obviously recognized some continuity with HIS Jewish heritage, there was also and more importantly, an element of radical discontinuity in the new revelation..." To put it in the language of Christ's censorious statement against the Pharisees; "But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple" (MATT:12:6) Like the Sabbath Law by the Quakers, Ramakrishnaites, specially Swami Vivekananda rejected the age old traditions and taboos, when and where these collided with human needs. Swamiji's human kindness and love for the condemned and down trodden people is evident in his letter to Sashi Maharaj in which he writes that he had received a letter from Ramdayal Babu complaining that

"...many public women attend the Ramakrishna anniversary festival at Dakshinshwar, which makes many less inclined to go there..." In reply he tells; "If public women are not allowed to go to such a great place of pilgrimage as Dakshineswar, where else shall they go to? It is for the sinful that the Lord manifests Himself specially, not so much for the virtuous. Let distinctions of sex, caste, wealth, learning and the whole host of them, which are so many gateways to hell, be confined to the world alone. If such distinctions persist in holy places of pilgrimage, where then lies the difference between them and hell itself Ours is a gigantic city of Jagannath, where those who have sinned and those who have not, the saintly and the vicious, men and women and children irrespective of age, all have equal rights." (Letters of Swami Vivekananda, page 302).

In the beginning even; "for the closest followers of Christ at first 'had enormous difficulty in knowing' that HE was trying to start something really new." Early Christians also thought that most of these sacraments and ceremonials were not necessary. And "only by a tremendous upheaval could Peter, in his relationship with Cornelius come to see that dietary laws and restrictions have nothing to do with true religion or with the love of God and man. Whatever value the ancient emphasis once had upon clean and unclean foods, which was akin to the sacramental idea, it no longer retained any value at all for those whose communion was with the living Christ", so commented Trueblood. Ramakrishna Movement's attitude towards the sacraments

and the food etc. was almost similar to that of the Quakers as propounded above by Trueblood, the Quaker with regard to Christianity - only the difference was Hinduism and Sri Ramakrishna in place of Christianity and Christ.

No doubt Simon Peter accepted circumcision as a really-important sacrament, but to the Quakers what was important was "...for neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." (GAL 6:15). Here in this regard to both the Quakers and Ramakrishnaite, it was not of such great importance whether they were Christians and Hindus since both of them were drawn towards something more, something new, and something different and more creative than ever before. In fact even now the views of some of the Quakers are clearly greater and much more meaningful than what is envisaged by those who think that Christ's novelty of approach was merely to substitute new ceremonial acts to the old ones. The same was the stand of some of the exponents of the separate 'minority' stand of the Ramakrishna Order. However both the Gospel of Christ (New Testament) as well as Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna never disdained these outward ceremonial acts altogether - nor abjured - none of its earlier position. The emphasis, on the religion and its practices coming 'out of the heart of man' (Mark 7:21) is much more of importance and significance both for the Quakers as well as to the Ramakrishnaite according to the approach of Swami Vivekananda to the Ramakrishna Movement, no doubt.

Like Swami Vivekananda (who was of the same view), young George Fox came to recognize this 'new' aspect of the revolution in the advent of Christ (like that of Sri Ramakrishna too) and excepting this new aspect - all other issues were of secondary importance to both of them. Like the Quaker's attitude towards the baptism and Christianity - Ramakrishna Movement's attitude towards Hinduism was also very affirmative too. It can be safely said that whatever Christ as well as Sri Ramakrishna did - it would have never have been able to achieve without being a sacerdotalist of the absolute type. Baptism in the Jordan river or with its water was something pre-Christian according to the Quakers. It is stated that Luke mentions Christ as having said: "But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am straitened till it be accomplished". This uttering of Christ is very similar to a line in the favourite song of Sri Ramakrishna which says: 'Putting to sleep, the very thing known as sleep itself' or 'being awake and alert in the very practice itself or in any such celebrations that carries you away from the real goal' (which Luke has expressed as accomplishments). Where does the question of formal ceremonial and physical baptism arise? Specially when it is said that "Jesus himself did not baptize but His only disciples." The same was true of Sri Ramakrishna also: he accepted and was guided by many teachers of various religions but he himself did not directly give sannyasa to even his direct disciples, in any formal sense of the term.

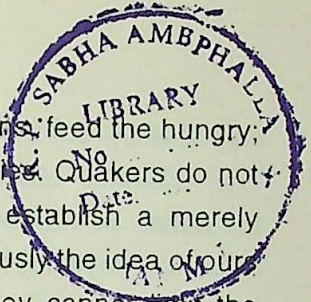
The words 'baptism' and 'inordination' makes different sense to different people; to some it means a new life and to some others it is a formal act. So there is lot of confusion. It is truly said that: "the continuing ambiguity in our generation is shown in the fact that some contemporary Christians insist on full immersion (in the river Jordon, like in the river Ganga/Ganges for a Hindu, that helps in the cleaning of the mind against many sinful thoughts and acts of life), some are satisfied with mere sprinkling of the holy water, some demand the use of running water etc. If there is one valid physical demand, they cannot all be right! Actually what is important is not sacerdotal acts, but rather the new man and his relationship (union) with the God. That is to say 'baptism' the immersion of a person's whole being in the love of Christ. It is in this sense that Quakers understood their own position....."

What is to be really noted is that "The physical ceremony is neither necessary nor sufficient, it is not something to be denounced either, if it is helpful for dramatizing of the faith, this certainly does no harm." But under no circumstances it should be allowed to become a necessary and binding formality. It is a common phrase which is universally used is to 'baptize with fire' - what does it mean? Not only with the Christians but even among the sannyasis baptizing with fire is very widespread. Quakers meant the total spirit, not simply water or fire. Ofcourse "Gospel abounds in metaphorical references. The fellowship of Christ's followers is salt, and light, and leaven

....we are concerned with the water of life." Internal (however informal) involvement is what really matters.

'Leavening' was a favourite idea with Sri Ramakrishna. According to him these 'leavening' agents in the spiritual pursuit are broadly speaking external observances, worship of images, going on pilgrimages, keeping pious company, repetition of divine names etc. etc. He used to tell: "Honour both spirit and form, the sentiment within as well as the symbol without, as a toy fruit or a toy elephant reminds one of the real fruit and the living animal, so do the images that are worshipped remind one of God who is formless and eternal, the companionship of the holy and the wise is one of the main elements of spiritual progress." (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, page 100/104). For Swami Vivekananda natural elements like thunder, fire, sun, moon, breeze and the smell of earth after the first showers acted as 'leaveners' indeed. However the Ramakrishna Order in general would favour the idea of 'salt' - to be salt of the earth, salt of life etc. etc. Naturally with the salt comes the concept of 'water' which is nearer to life as well as to salt both at the same time. 'The entire church is referred to as those of way (and the door)' by christianity.

When one talks of life, one comes nearer to the body than to the spirit no doubt. The idea of body is always accompanied with the need for nourishment to keep it fit and healthy. The ideas of body and food cannot be separated; they go hand in hand. So it is said that "....bodies are important just as truly as minds and spirits are important,



this is why Quakers, like other Christians, feed the hungry, it is why they seek to heal broken bodies. Quakers do not intend, and have never intended to establish a merely spiritual religion. Quakers take so seriously the idea of yours being a sacramental universe that they cannot limit the notion to a particular ceremony of initiation." The spirit of service in the Ramakrishna Order is of the same kind and type and draws its inspiration deeply from the ancient Hindu notion of 'SERVICE' in the scriptures, this noble idea of service is what Swami Vivekananda sought to revive once again. He went to the extent of declaring; "Blessed are they whose bodies get destroyed in the service of others and that you work best when your work is for others." Ramakrishnaites too emphasised on the holy sacrifice, sacrifice of the notions of 'I' and 'mine' instead of formal sacraments of the priestly class and declared that with an empty stomach no religion is possible for anybody or any community.

Although may not be to that extent as in the decadent divided Hindu community, ceremonies and celebrations aimed at bringing people together have failed to achieve their goal in the Christian community also as stated by Trueblood: "It is a misfortune then, that the ceremony which might be expected to be the most unifying of any among Christians has in fact often been divisive." (The People Called Quakers: page 138) obviously most of the celebrations were for identity, for equality, for inclusion and existence. Although Ramakrishna Order does not follow it

very literally, but the idea is almost same apparently. And, "The Quaker attitude towards the celebration of the Eucharist, in whatever form is today is one of complete freedom. Anything that will help to deepen or to sweeten human life is to be encouraged." With such noble ideals and 'toleration' Quakers were very near to the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda who said: 'It is love and love alone that I preach, and I base my teaching on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the Universe.'

VI

Every movement, whether religious, political or social prefers to have some restrictions on the apparel and appearance of their members. Accordingly to most of the Quakers, atleast in the early days a sombre if not gloomy dress was the best choice. They tried to be as little as possible showy in the mode of their dress and demeanour. However to Margaret Fox, wife of George Fox who was much respected by Quakers not only as the wife of George Fox but also for the sterling qualities of heart and mind, it was a different matter. She was much senior to George Fox both in age and social status for she was of noble birth, attractive, cultured and prosperous to a high degree but she had genuine love for the Quaker Movement and had" ... thrown her spacious house open for the meetings of the Quakers. She had interceded for them when they were in jail and on two or three occasions she had gone to jail herself on their behalf. To her bright and showy clothes and a too

joyous appearance was something alien to the spirit of the Christ "Who told his followers not to take thought about what to eat or drink, or what they should put on, but instead, to consider the lilies." Lilies were bright rather than the dull gray colour which was the colour most of the Quakers preferred. Neither Swami Vivekananda nor his illustrious Master Sri Ramakrishna liked people to have a melancholic look as if suffering from dyspepsia; they wanted people to be happy and joyous reflecting the inner happiness and joy. Margaret Fox named any movement which denies happiness and joy to its supporters as a "silly poor gospel" and rightly too!

So naturally there was always a kind of conflict between those who wanted to be serious and very strict in their attitude and those who preferred a path mellowed by music and cultural activities. So, "Some elements of greatness appeared inspite of the rigidity and the cultural poverty." It is also said that: "...indeed her (Margaret Fox) approach did not have full Quaker acceptance for two hundred years", as the "battle included the whole relationship between the Christian and the life of culture" with the result that the Quaker Movement, in its earliest days had a very poor record in music but a very good record in natural sciences." Whereas in the Ramakrishna Movement it is just the opposite: Sri Ramakrishna from the beginning was very fond of music and other arts and crafts besides being a very good singer with a sweet voice and his favourite disciple Swami Vivekananda was not only a very good singer with a melodious voice but was also proficient in

playing several musical instruments. Infact he declared that "Music is the highest art and to those who understand, is the highest worship." Besides several disciples of the Master were very good singers and even today devotional music occupies a reverential position in all the centres of Ramakrishna Math and Mission at home and abroad. However it is sad to note that its contribution to natural science was not that conspicuous, inspite of the expectation of its great founder Swami Vivekananda who desired scientific and technological development to go hand in hand with the spiritual regeneration.

This need for some divertisement and relaxation is obvious when it is said that "...this survival (existence) was tagged with spiritual (essential), almost in a bracket. 'I am come that might have life, and they might have it more abundantly.'" (John 10:10) Barclay pointed out that: "Man's spirits could not subsist, if they were always intent upon serious and spiritual matters, and that therefore there is need of some divertisement to recreate the mind a little, whereby it being refreshed, is able to do with greater vigour to apply itself to these things."

In the Ramakrishna culture, all these - music, art and craft etc are all very much approved within limits; similarly amongst the Quakers. For according to Barclay: "...granted the validity of this remonstrance, but hastened to assert that a Christian must never engage in any species of recreation which causes him to 'recede from the remembrance of God.'" Most probably he (Barclay) felt that music, dancing in

ecstasy and all other form of arts in general would involve such forgetfulness. Instead of these it seems he preferred devotees going to each other, hearing and reading history, to speak soberly of the past and the present transactions, gardening and to develop such scholastic hobbies like maths, geometry, algebra, logic etc., that are followed by the naturalists. Excepting the last 2/3 items, all other relaxations above mentioned are allowed freely in the Ramakrishna Movement. Sri Ramakrishna was, as already mentioned, very fond of music specially the singing of kirtans. We are told by 'M' the biographer of the Master that on a certain day: "After supper the devotees rested on the mat spread on the floor of the Master's room. They began to talk with him. It was indeed a mart of joy. The Master asked Narendra to sing the song beginning with the line: 'Wisom's firmament of the moon of Love is rising full....' Narendra sang and other devotees played the drums and cymbals. Sri Ramakrishna sang and danced, and the devotees danced around him." (Gospel page 122) The Master led a clean, simple and austere life and his life style was clean like the Quakers and like them his talk on spiritual matters was simple, plain and understandable by all people. His speciality lie in illustrating all his talk and teachings with parables from scriptures and everyday happenings in the life of a common man which helped in their understanding of his philosophy and spiritual guidance. Swami Saradananda narrates in his book 'SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE GREAT MASTER' how Sri Ramakrishna's illumining Self-knowledge and his vision of the Self in all beings, both male and female, kept the minds

of all near him at such a high level of spiritual relation that the ideas such as 'I am a man', 'this is a woman' etc. would not usually cross their minds as long as they were with him. That is why, like men, women also felt no shyness in his presence." (pages 393/394). However he differed in his views from the Quakers regarding music, drama and allied performing arts like circus, dancing etc. etc. Many were the occasions when he asked his devotees to take him to watch a circus or attended a kirtan party and each and every thing he watched on the platform used to remind him of some episode or other in the scriptures and holy books. As such the mere sight of a tiger in a circus brought to his mind the divinity of goddess Durga and many such incidents are recorded in the Gospel.

One may even venture to state that the Quaker Movement would have grown faster with a large membership if not for their certain strict adherence to principles: being of the same view Trueblood commented: "Many of the finest persons among the settlers wanted to be Quakers, but were either expelled or merely repelled, because they would not limit their speech to a stereotype, give up the music they loved so much...." So this led Rufus Jones in the later period of the Quaker Movement to question if one considered music was that sensuous and there existed the possibility of it creating passion and other low kind of behaviour amongst the members, then what about money and its possession of which the Quakers were so much enamoured with and prized. True Sri Ramakrishna

could never touch money which he considered as worthless. It is said that on a certain day he stood on the banks of the Ganges with a lump of mud in one hand and with some money in the other and threw both of them into the Ganges saying both are useless. Again when once a wealthy Marwari offered him ten thousand rupees he refused to accept it and directed him to his wife Sarada Devi saying that she could if she so desired, can accept it. Sarada Devi also refused to accept the money. But Sri Ramakrishna was so much against money, name and fame, yet was very fond of devotional music. So also the Quakers were very particular about the kind of books and literature they read and as such "for several generations Quaker lives were sorely impoverished by the complete rejection of novels and Romances." Whereas Sri Ramakrishna himself enjoyed one or two novels which depicted the life (in Bengali), of Bankim Chandra read out to him by somebody. It is said that one day the Master went to Panchavati with the devotees.....the Master asked 'M' wheter he had the book to which 'M' replied in affirmative. Then the Master said: "Read a little to me". "The devotees were eager to know the name of the book. It was called DEVI CHOUDHURANI. The Master had heard that the book dealt with motive-less action. He had also heard of the great renown of its author, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, whom he had met some days before and he wanted to gauge the author's mind from the book." (Gospel, page 685). So also in the Ramakrishna Order there is very little restriction as to what one should read and one should not, like that of the Quakers. It is said that many Quakers

believed that even Shakespeare dealt in his writings with sinful human tendencies and situations and so not worthy of perusal by good people. So many were the cultural restrictions in the Quaker Movement, almost the same as of the Protestant moral regourism. And, "If there had not been a revolution, Quakerism would have become nothing more than an ineffective sect in the modern world, and would now be referred to, for the most part as historically interesting, but contemporaneously irrelevant." John Stephen Rowntree was bold enough to point out and criticize the peculiar form of the Quaker worship which had reached an absurd extreme point in many cases whereas its rejection of music and other fine arts had not only made it barren but had landed in a kind of isolation and static condition. Only after 1860 the Quakers started reconsidering the inclusion of music and other fine arts in their Movement. In the meantime a great artist and painter by name of Benjamin West was born in 1738 and this artist from Pennsylvania was destined to change the serious demeanour of the Quakers considerably.

It is interesting to note how very particular Sri Ramakrishna was in this respect: although he appreciated some fine paintings depicting Divinity and spiritual concepts which were displayed in the houses of his devotees like Jadu Mallick and others including Surendra Mitra, he did not approve of any paintings catering to the baser instincts of man depicting nudity, cruelty to man as well as to animals etc. Whereas Swami Vivekananda's modern attitude not

only to paintings but to all fine arts is well known. Specially his appreciation of Japanese paintings by the well known Japanese painter Mr. Okakura and the deep respect and love the latter had for Swamiji is something very interesting. "Two learned Buddhists from Japan Mr. Okakura and Rev. Oda met Swami Vivekananda at the Belur Math. Mr. Oda told Swamiji that he had come to India with a special objective of inviting him to visit Japan so that he might attend a Congress of Religions that was contemplated to be held there in the near future. 'If such a distinguished person as you take part in the Congress,' said Rev. Oda, 'it will ensure its success. Japan stands in need of a religious awakening and we do not know of any one who can bring about this much desired consummation.' Swamiji was deeply moved by Rev. Oda's appeal. He had a feeling that there was little chance of his being well enough again to be able to begin a mission in Japan, as he had done in the West in 1893, however, much that was necessary, agreed to co-operate in the great task in which Rev. Oda and Mr. Okakura seemed to be engaged." (VIVEKANANDA His Gospel of Man-making.... page 605). Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble), the disciple of Swami Vivekananda is reported to have done some such inspirational work through Rabindra Nath Tagore and Nandalal Bose etc. in getting the connection with Japan.

In contrast to their attitude towards music of any type, art and literature the Quakers had a very sensitive and sharp appreciation for architecture and it is rightly said that "Quaker culture is nowhere so sharp than in connection with

architecture." Supporting this view William James wrote in the Journal in 1651 that when "I lifted up my head and espied three steeple-house spires, as they struck at my life - I asked them what place that was, they said, 'Lickfield' Immediately the way of the Lord came to me that thither I must go". However George Fox had very little use or appreciation for such things for he is reported to have remarked once: "Woe to the bloody city of Lickfield." It is often said that the abode of god has a beauty of its own; this applies so well when it is said that "...when meeting houses were built by Quakers, they were plain unadorned structures but it is a part of the paradox that they were often designed with remarkable aesthetic taste ...The beauty arises not from any decoration at all, but from the fine proportions and evident honesty of the building". Sri Ramakrishna also has said "...know that there must be the manifestation of God in places where countless people have for long practised austerity, japa, meditation prayer and worship with a view to realising HIM. Through their devotion spiritual ideas are present in these places in a solidified form, as it were. Hence there a man easily feels the awakening of spirituality and realises HIM." This is called a spiritual vibration.

Further Quaker Movement also had the distinction of having some brilliant students of architecture and designing, on its roll- call. These were one of the best during the middle age including Thomas Rickman (1776 - 1841). Similarly Ramakrishna Movement also can boast of having some of the best engineers and architects of the period like Swami

Vijnanandaji Maharaj, brother-disciple of Swami Vivekananda who assisted Swamiji in the building of the Belur Math Temple more or less on the lines suggested by Swami Vivekananda. - Swami Vijnanandaji himself a student of the civil engineering and town planning etc. during those days. Ofcourse Swami Vijnanadaji could not be a Rickman of the Ramakrishna Movement mainly because of his interest in spiritual matters, becoming much more intense than architecture.

Inspite of their conservative notions regarding art, music, literature etc. Quakers shone prominently in the educational field. Although some of them like Elias Hicks sought to emphasize somewhat disproportionately on the significance of the 'inner-light' as against the so-called Human-learning, their attitude towards education was almost as universal as that of Swami Vivekananda's 'manifestation' theory. Swamiji had also declared that "....education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man." Hicks also had spoken in the same vein of 'Human Science' and its development as that of 'growth' and development. George Fox himself was interested in the development of education and was involved in the founding of 2/3 schools in England alone. At the Shacklewell School which he had founded he had declared: "....set up to instruct young lasses and maidens in whatsoever things that were civil and useful in the creation." And it was his belief that "Ingenuity mixed with industry is good for the body and mind too." Both Plato as well as Swami Vivekananda had

emphasised on the development both of body and mind. However, now-a-days there is complaint regarding the schools run by the Ramakrishna Movement that although there is this development of 'body' aspect through games and sports but in actual assessment the emphasis seems to be more on the so-called discipline and academical excellence rather than all round development of body and mind. Besides, it is also said that in most of the Rama-Krishna Mission Schools, because of the over-crowding in classes and allied ills, 'systems' and collective supervision has come to stay more or less permanently in place of individual care and attention for which these institutions were once famous for. On the other-hand Schools run by the Quaker Movement had a rare combination of respect and realism concerning each individual student. Creativity and inspiration are likely to be more, when a child is taken in the image of God and is taken care of according to his/her needs and mental make-up. Swami Vivekananda desired that schools run by the Ramakrishna Mission should follow the above principle for he once said: "We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's own feet since education is not filling the mind with a lot of facts." By this he never meant any kind of leniency or compromise in the standard of education imparted, it must be tough love and not soft love or favouritism. In the Lancastrian Schools, brilliant capable and successful older pupils were also employed to teach younger students - a worthy practice

which has never been tried in the Ramakrishna Mission Schools. However the Mission does have few boarding schools run on the Haverford Type. There are seven to eight colleges in America which are run by the Quaker Movement. It is worthy to note that all the schools and colleges run by the Ramakrishna Mission are public rather than sectarian institutions so also the institutions run by the Quakers, for it is believed that "There is a very serious effort to do more in these institutions than to copy the secularized colleges and their programmes."

As against the Ramakrishna Movement's educational activities covering all sciences, the Quaker Movement's penchant is for natural science which is attributed to their love for Truth and truth alone, more than beauty or any other thing in life. Quakers are more interested in natural science - specially animal life, biology and botany. For instance Edward Drinker Cope, a Quaker was famous for his contribution to Paleontology and Zoology. Besides there were Joseph Moore, Worth Dennis, Allan D. Hole etc. all first class scientists. Dennis was a distinguished geologist. There was John Dalton, in the field of electricity there was Silvanus P. Thompson and Joseph Lister is well known for his contribution to Anaesthesia and surgery. Physicist Arthur Eddington himself a Quaker did not accept religion as his only creed but accepted to an extent the amount of inner-light that comes into ones experience 'showing us a way through the unseen world.' Thus Eddington's emphasis on 'experience' although of a different type and mainly

helpful to scientific endeavour and research can be very well compared to Swami Vivekananda's proclamation that 'experience is the only source of knowledge, the one teacher, the one eye-opener and the best teacher perhaps in the whole world.'

Since Quakerism began with 'experience' rather than any dogma/dogmas, it was able to attract so many scientifically talented personalities which the Ramakrishna Movement sadly failed to provide to its members which may to some extent explain the lack of highly trained personnel in the Ramakrishna Mission circle. Not that the Mission lacked highly talented and brilliant men from all branches of science from its inception: the Mission could boast of such high calibre personalities like Swami Raghaveshananda - a brilliant student of Geology of the Calcutta University, then there was Swami Vipulananda who was a talented authority on ancient Tamil literature, a great devoted psychologist like Swami Akhilananda and scholars like Swamis Madhavananda, Nirvedananda, Satprakashananda, Gambhirananda, Vimalananda etc. etc. - but none of them could shine forth in their own fields, for various reasons, factors generally believed to be not very congenial to their individual personality and development. Otherwise many of them atleast had the profundity of great learning with the faith of a little child to harbour in their own chosen field of scholarship. It was unfortunate that many of them were caught in the commonality mainly due to a general organization-culture, in the welter of which there was a

general pattern and a common mediocre culture which had to be followed. Excellences were not attended properly.

Judging from its present state (which is yet to be explored), it can be easily said that like the Quaker Movement, Ramakrishna Movement also is heading towards being a sect or a church in its general direction in contrast to its missionary and radical activities of its early history. First of all a missionary is more dynamic as compared to its working or functioning as a religious body or society with some so-called permanent notions and principles as carry overs or just to keep its continuity with its past, more than a clear and vulnerable future. Continuing the comparison it is said, "...that the focus of the early church was not the temple and its ceremonial requirements: neither was it the synagogue were centripetal, drawing men from homes and business towards a center. The early church was centrifugal, sending men into the world. The characteristic preposition, for the primitive christian movement was 'out' rather than 'in'." As it is said in the Bible: "And he called unto him the twelve and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;" (MARK 6:7). Really it can be said that this was a new and better strategy than to turn mere disciples i.e. learners into apostles.

Obviously such figuratives as 'salt', 'light', 'leaven' are vivid expressions of the depth of penetration - "The salt is to be the salt of the earth, light to be the light of the world and the place for the leaven to operate is not in splendid isolation, but in the lump. This is why we speak today of Christianity

as a worldly faith" - comments Trueblood. 17th Century Quakers had come as an aggressive band of torch-bearers to make the world a better place to live than what it was at the time of George Fox. The conditions that prevailed at that time according to George Fox himself was one of brutality and suffering and he found the priestly class as "traders of religion....He found them all to be nothing but 'empty, hollow casks'. The earthly spirit of the priests wounded my life: and when I heard the bell toll to call people together to the steeple-house, it struck at my life: for it was just like a market bell, to gather people together that the priest might set forth, his ware for sale...." (Conditions prevailing at the time of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the country were no better either.) However, "not every Quaker of the first generation made long journey of a missionary nature, but an astonishing proportion did so." George Fox once wrote from one of the foulest prisons in which he was thrown into by the then government and which he himself describes with a touch of humour: ".....one day, the Governor of the prison came to see me. The cell was 'so filled with smoke that he could hardly find his way out again; and he, being a Papist, I told him that this was his Purgatory which they had put me into" George Fox urged: "Let every nation hear the word by sound or writing...go through the world and be valiant for the truth upon earth. Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people and to them." Very similar was the call of Swami Vivekananda who entreated monastic brethren to: "go from village to

village, do good to humanity and to the world at large. The good live for others alone. The wise man should sacrifice himself for others.....Preach the idea of elevating the masses by means of a central college, and bringing education as well as religion to the door of the poor by means of missionaries trained in this college. Remember that the nation lives in the cottages.....impress upon their minds that they have the same right to religion as the Brahmans. Initiate all, even down to the 'chandalas'. Also instruct them in simple words, about the necessities of life and in trade, commerce, agriculture etc. etc. If the mountain does not come to the Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain. The poor are too poor to come to schools and pathshalas." Unfortunately it looks as though this fiery clarion call of Swamiji has some what cooled down considerably even amongst the core-people of the Ramakrishna Movement nowadays. With the Quakers it was their missionary zeal which saw them through all their difficulties including the wrath of the government and made the movement so popular. However too much of missionary zeal and work is not officially nowadays very much encouraged by the Ramakrishna Order: on the other hand they prefer to proceed in their own approved formal manner and through their own people.

With the growing popularity and expansion programme of the Quaker Movement, certain changes became obvious; this is nothing new since in most of the movements of this type changes are bound to creep in.

Regarding the Quaker Movement it is said that "We are accustomed, in our day, to a missionary activity in which the work of missions is administered by boards and secretaries. People who feel led to volunteer for foreign service are screened carefully, given training if any is needed and sent to far way places with all expenses paid. Early Quakerism had none of this" It is also said that "with an amazing simplicity, funds were collected and disbursed without any office and with a minimum of organisation." (Almost the same is the story of the Ramakrishna Mission.) Further apologetically it is stated that "After the first fire of enthusiasm had died down, Quakers still carried out some missionary work but with some difference i.e. (1) its ambition and dynamism of the conversion were all gone and (2) now all its activities, itineraries etc. were all mostly confined to within the Quaker community itself.

Thankfully this state of affairs did not continue to persist for long. With the coming of George Richardson (who died in 1862) the missionary activities of the Quakers revived ofcourse in a different manner. As was expected by many, that the activities of the Quaker Movement which uptil now were confined to their own community and area of operation would lead to a pastoral system in the mission fields thereby, venturing and covering newer fields of operation proved to be true. They were correct in their judgement. As a result there was a surge of missionary work, mainly through some American Quaker friends. Unfortunately some of this missionary effort that showed

such vitality in the beginning of the 20th century once again dwindled dramatically. Mainly the missionary fervour was dampened may be because of the recognition of obvious value attached to other different religions. This recognition and appreciation of other religions might have made the movement milder no doubt. And so it is said that, "As Quakers have reconsidered their basic missionary motive they see, with as much clarity as ever, that Christianity is in its very nature diffusive." This realisation was very sound and good indeed for it allowed the Quakers to expand their activities in other places also. So is perhaps the attitude of the Ramakrishna Movement which by its very nature diffusive from the beginning and is well known for its universal and harmonious outlook towards all the religions. Sri Ramakrishna used to say again and again that "God can be realized through all paths. All religions are true. The important thing is to reach the roof. You can reach it by stone stairs or by wooden stairs or by bamboo steps or by a rope. You can also climb up by a bamboo pole. You may say that there are many errors and superstitions in another religion. I would reply: Suppose there are. Every religion has errors. Everyone thinks that his watch alone gives the correct time. It is enough to have yearning for God. It is enough to love HIM and feel attracted to HIM." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page 112). And like Sri Ramakrishna, Quakers also believed in what Christ has said: "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." These views of both Sri Ramakrishna and Christ corroborate Swami Vivekananda's statement: "There were never no two religions, (but) there is one religion and there

are many sects and the goal of every religion is the same" (Complete Works, Vol. 8 & IV). So the vital question arises as to when Christ, Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda are of one mind on this point, where is the need then to establish a particular religion or a sect with so much special effort?

Another great feature of similarity between the Quaker and Ramakrishna Movements can easily be, as has been already mentioned somewhere back, is the union (rather the dialectical relationship) between the religious experience and social concern. Actually it is an union of two opposites - between the quiet inward life of a seeker and the boisterous outward participation in the affairs of the mundane world, to put in the words of E. B. Castle - "an effortless penetration into (not only) every corner of life, into the intimate personal, but also into the social and political." (APPROACH TO QUAKERISM). Although Ramakrishna Movement's success in this regard may not be so conspicuous. However the approach seems to be similar in nature. One of the reasons for the Ramakrishna Movement's low-profile performance in this regard may be due to the unfamiliarity of such modern missionary dynamics with Hinduism and the conditions prevailing in India; whereas it is not a new addition to the nature of Christian society, rather one can dare to say it is an intrinsic part of it.

Even to have achieved this much, the Ramakrishna Movement had to swim against the current of orthodoxy and conservatism prevailing at that time. So in the fields of work of service and relief in foreign countries, Quaker Movement

has an edge over Ramakrishna Movement since under the able guidance of George Richard, about a century ago, the former was able to spread itself geographically since"... others have helped to enlarge it politically and economically." And "in no single way has this been more spectacular than in the work of service and relief". It is a fact that missionary work in foreign countries by the Ramakrishna Order has not been so encouraging it seems now as it was to the swamis of the Order some three decades ago. Besides, many Hindu missionaries, with different names, colours and designations have entered the field for various reasons including monetary benefits, glamour, affiliation etc. etc. Even in the relief work during floods, famine, drought, earth-quakes etc. at home only, because of the political interference and other discouraging factors, Ramakrishna Order which was always known for its relief work throughout the country is facing lot of trouble and some kind of crisis these days - although very unfortunate indeed.

In recognition of their sterling service Quakers (American Friends Service Committee) received the much coveted Nobel Prize award in the year 1947 and the citation said: "The Quakers have shown us that it is possible to carry into action something that is deeply rooted in the minds of many people - a sympathy with others; a desire to help others; that significant expression of sympathy between men without regard to race or nationality. These feelings translated into deeds must provide the foundations of a

lasting peace." Although Ramakrishna Mission's capacity to undertake relief work may not be as extensive as that of the Quaker Movement, nevertheless its ideals are almost the same as has been cited in the Nobel Prize award. Their relief work covers all sections of people without any distinction as to caste, creed or nationality. Excepting the work connected in war-funds and war-relief, Ramakrishna Mission has undertaken various types of relief on a miniature scale, meaning thereby not on international level and the work which is done under the able guidance of Swamis living on the affected premises has been well appreciated even by the Government agencies.

Quakers' specialised fields of work consist of founding and running of hospitals, construction of emergency housing for refugees as well as production and distribution of food and clothing. Although these tasks are far beyond the capacity of the Ramakrishna Mission they have also helped (although on a low key) the Burma refugees by opening an office at Calcutta in collaboration with the Government of Bengal and then subsequently an air-raid protection service rendered by some swamis at Calcutta during the World War II under aegis of the government of course. At home they have provided relief to the famine and flood stricken men and animals in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Specially in providing houses for the flood victims at low cost and in record time calls for much appreciation and applause. So also several thousands of cattle were

provided with fodder and water during the recent famine in Gujarat.

So also the training of young people in various fields of work and sending them to various parts of the country whenever a need arose has been undertaken by the Ramakrishna Mission just like the Quakers. These include Ramakrishna Mission Social Education Organisers Training Camp, Gram Sevak Training Centres besides the Senior and Junior Basic Education Training Centre. Junior and Senior Polytechnics. Again at the village level, (it is reported that 'almost one-third of the activities of the Math and Mission are concentrated in rural and tribal areas',) Ramakrishna Mission is running Centres known as 'PALLIMANGAL' where village women are employed for producing handicrafts and woven cloth which are sold to the public. Besides mobile medical vans with good supply of medicines under the guidance of senior doctors visit remote villages to treat patients at their door-steps. Apart from the regular school services some centres provide education and training for the blind and handicapped. Several night schools are also run by the Mission. Several Centres also distribute nutritional food to economically weaker sections and in particular to children and mothers. Occupational institutions, colleges, orphanages, hostels, students' homes, educational and employment oriented institutions for tribal boys and girls, libraries and auditoriums, schools and colleges for agriculture, farming, poultry management,

pisiculture etc. are some of the activities conducted by the Mission.

True, no individual institute or mission, however rich and dedicated it may be, can achieve as much as a government can. But then where is the need to feel despondent, if ones targets fall short to that of the government. Quakers also did all that they could both in the social and spiritual fields but they never had the feeling or the inferiority complex, that they have been displaced or overshadowed by the extensive and glamorous projects undertaken by the government and its agencies. It will be in the fitness of things, if like the Quakers, Ramakrishna Mission also should feel proud and contented as well as grateful that a good idea has been adopted and extended to a greater extent than is possible for a voluntary organisation could ever do seldom single handed. At the same time the government also should feel happy and be grateful for such services rendered by the organisation.

Like the Quaker Movement, Ramakrishna Movement also, should get itself involved into newer and more extensive fields of social service viz. concern over the existing evil of slavery, prison life, civil rights etc. However it looks there is very little possibility in this direction mainly because of its own inability, discouragement and lack of enthusiasm and political involvement. There is nothing new about this political involvement: Quakers entered into politics also through their friends and admirers, which led William Penn to remark: "Government seems to me a part

of religion in itself, a thing sacred in its institution and end" Late Joan Fry (1862 - 1955) has also remarked that "....Quakerism is nothing unless it be a communion of life, a practical showing that spiritual and material spheres are not divided, but are as concave and convex sides of one whole" - which Ramakrishna Movement, it seems, could never officially approve anytime - but still doing it in the same manner. Quaker philosophy denied the distinction between the secular and the sacred, whereas Ramakrishna Movement has still some confusion in this regard. On the face of the growing of trade unionism, Ramakrishna Movement is still suffering badly: on the otherhand industrial and manufacturing houses like Cadburys and other coca factories owned by Quakers have been treating their fellow workers somewhat leniently and differently with good results. A religious movement is untrue to its genius when it becomes fixed and ceases to be mobile and responsive to newer ideas. As the Quaker leader Woolman said once: "To turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives." So, in conclusion one can say that many things are to be done or said as John in the Bible says: "I have yet many thing to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now." (St. John. 16:12).

VII

No treatise is complete without some reference to the literature of the subject - may it be social, political or religious. So apart from what is called Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Literature published by the

Ramakrishna Movement, their other publications are mostly scriptural translations and allied subjects. There are very few books indeed giving out a comprehensive view of the philosophy and history of the Ramakrishna Movement. Yet these books, specially Ramakrishna literature has a special attraction to the general public. Similarly, "...Quaker books, partly because they are so numerous, have exerted a strong influence not only on Quaker readers, but on the mind of the general public. And in this way Quakerism has escaped the fate of an inarticulate sect and has become a topic of conversation among several readers." Like the 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' - most of the original writings of the Quakers, as that of George Fox etc. are not the ultimate testimony of any argument, speculation, or dialectic - but the simple record of what has occurred. Like the characteristic language of the Gospel, Quaker language is the language of the empirical evidence which though it may be criticized cannot be transgressed.

Actually, "...the mood in which Fox and his many imitators wrote was that which has given vivid modern expression by the contemporary French Existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel." 'I am obliged' writes Marcel, 'to bear witness because I hold as it were, a particle of light, and to keep it to myself, would be equivalent to extinguishing it' (The Philosophy of Existence, 1948, Eng., page 67) Though may not be on the same lines and quantity, Ramakrishna Mission and its worthy swamis have contributed sufficiently prodigious travelogues to the literary

world just like the Quakers. Writing of this type of literature in fact started with Swami Vivekananda with his small books on 'EAST & WEST', his lectures collected in a book form titled 'FROM COLOMBO TO ALMORA' etc. etc. Then followed writings by Swami Akhandananda in particular his book titled 'FROM HOLY WANDERINGS TO THE SERVICE OF GOD IN MAN' which was much appreciated by one and all. Then followed prolific writings by the monks of the Ramakrishna Order in large numbers. Like the Quakers, Ramakrishna Vivekananda Literature has also produced considerable amount of devotional writings of good quality and wide acceptance as somebody has declared 'so far, as the reading public is concerned.' So naturally all the books may not have come up to the standards of scholars. Giving a valid reason for this overflow of devotional literature it is said that "there are many reasons for this new burst of devotional writing, but one of the most important among them is the renewed emphasis upon the authority of religious experience." Books either translated or in original are also available in most of the regional languages also.

It is reported that once when Geroge Fox was charged with fomenting a revolution to overthrow the government of Oliver Cromwell, the dictator, Fox sent a letter to Cromwell stating: 'I deny the wearing or drawing of any carnal weapon against him or any other man, that I was sent of God to stand a witness against all violence, to turn people from darkness to light and to bring them from the causes of war and fighting to the peaceable gospel' (Living Biographies of Religious

Leaders, page 207). Just as the principle of incarnation could not be separated from the Doctrine of Divine Inner-light in the Quaker Movement, so also the towering personality of Sri Ramakrishna and his religion of God-love can never be separated from the devotional and spiritual light of the Order. Swami Vivekananda has justly declared that "HE (Sri Ramakrishna) is a power, living even now in his disciples and working in the world.....His life is a searchlight of infinite power thrown upon the whole mass of Indian religious thought and He is the latest and the most perfect - the concentrated embodiment of knowledge, love, renunciation, catholicity and the desire to serve mankind" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vols. V, VII). Swamiji has pronounced HIm as a vision of a new vitality and that Sri Ramakrishna's all pervading love and concern for the suffering humanity has/ is persistingly driving all his disciples and devotees to do something for them.

Like Rufus Jones's book titled 'PATHWAYS TO THE REALITY OF GOD', Swami Brahamananda's book 'EXTERNAL COMPANIONS' comes directly from their respective religious experiences. Quakers had many inspired writers like Hannah Whitall Smith who wrote so convincingly about her secret concerning not only her simple Trust but absolute Trust. Ramakrishna Literature also invokes this kind of Trust and the kind of simple confidence in one and all and urges us to follow a life of utter devotion atleast, if not complete surrender. Hannah Smith's letters, edited and published by her own son under the title

'A RELIGIOUS REBEL' tells us, as if echoing her very own words: "I am convinced, it is a great art to know to grow old gracefully, and I am determined to practice it....I always thought I should love to grow old and I find it is even more delightful than I thought." What memorable words indeed!

Another Quaker by name Douglas V. Steere, Professor of philosophy at Hartford College has also established a good reputation as a scholarly interpreter of devotional classics. Ramakrishna literature as yet lacks not only such specialisation and creativity but it has so far failed to furnish the general public a clear notion and true picture of its activities and a complete history of the Movement; in this respect Quaker Movement has surpassed the Ramakrishna Movement. From whatever writings that are available in print, it is very clear that they are scanty both in bulk and material and are in a language which is not easily understood by the general public. The two books brought out by William Charles Braithwaite, titled 'THE BEGINNINGS OF QUAKERISM' in 1912 and 'THE SECOND PERIOD OF QUAKERISM' in 1919 respectively can act as a model for the writing and publication of the Ramakrishna Movement's history and its activities.

It is not that Ramakrishna Movement lacks eminent writers both in English and regional languages; for instance Professor Nemai Sadhana Bose can be requested to take such a study of the movement - both critically and in an objective manner. Again there is Professor Sankari Prasad Basu who has already made laudable contribution to the

Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita study and specially his seven volumes titled 'VIVEKANANDA IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE' is a unique publication, managed single handed. Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture's prestigious and voluminous publication titled 'Cultural Heritage of India' is perhaps the first and last publication of some high standard and international reputation. Nothing outstanding and unique regarding a cultural study and history of Ramakrishna Movement, excepting Swami Nirvedanandaji's book - 'Sri Ramakrishna and the Spiritual Renaissance', which again is only an introduction that has been produced so far.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that the Quaker Movement gained world wide name through a wide range of literary work concerning its origin, principles and activities by erudite scholars like Selwel's 'HISTORY OF THE QUAKER', another publication which was later made into a film is 'FRIENDLY PERSUASION' by Jessamyn West brought wide admiration for the Quaker Movement and its activities. Walt Whitman was for the Quaker Movement what Romain Rolland and Achintya Sengupta were for the Ramakrishna Movement. Infact there is enough literature both in Bengali, English and other regional languages regarding the Ramakrishna Movement and its activities if only a group of devoted and efficient scholars from all over the country dedicates itself to amalgamate all such existing literature into attractively brought out volumes. All such books naturally have to be brought out in all regional

languages besides in English. One such publication could be 'RAMAKRISHNA PUNTHI' which if circulated in rural areas will help in the spreading of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda messages effectively, however unfortunately upto now none has taken up this project in right earnest. It is certain that this project if done on proper lines will create lot of interest in the Movement.

VIII

"The Quakers are generally ridiculed as a drab and effeminate race of anchorites who refused to take an active part in life because they were afraid of a fight" But this is contrary to the truth: for Quakers were known for their integrity and individual characteristics in the fullest sense of the term. Just because Quakers had no fixed pattern of spiritual exercise because they believed in catholicity, they were mostly misunderstood and branded as having no character in contrast to Catholics and the Protestants who had a set of rigid rules and regulations to be followed by one and all. Robert Fowler, who pioneered and sailed the voyage of the Woodhouse with all endurance, courage and determination went so far as to remark once that "They gathered sticks, and kindled a fire and left it burning" (LOG OF THE WOODHOUSE). Actually this is the best description of the Quaker character - they kindled interest but gave ample freedom to arrive at ones own conclusion. Sri Ramakrishna also again and again told his devotees to think, ponder and meditate on anything before accepting it.

Quakerism is well known both for its ability to change and taken to new notions as well as to its character - not a changeless character, which would mean only a contradiction in terms. That the Quakers did not have any rigidly set pattern or form to be followed mechanically and blindly is apparent from the written instructions given by the elders at Balby to the 'brethern of the north': ".....do not lay upon you as a rule or from to walk by With the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided.....things may be fulfilled in the spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life."

Actually an informal atmosphere with ample freedom and responsibility is essential for any kind of creativity; creativity is not possible through bureaucratic discipline which saps out not only a good percentage of spontaneous work but also considerable amount of inspired dedication. So it is rightly said that: "It is good to pay close heed to what George Fox and others said three hundred years ago, but it would be a great mistake to suppose that the words of these pioneers are sufficient guide for our feet or that the practices of yesterday must necessarily be practices of tomorrow." Like the Quaker Movement, Ramakrishna Movement has also seen through many great changes, not only within itself but all around, specially that kind of controls and formal patterning which might have been very patronising to the authority and the office but surely not to the brotherhood! When similar thing had happened to the Quaker Movement to certain extent it was observed: "When

the pastoral system was instituted, as a Quaker novelty almost a hundred years ago, there were good arguments for it and there were good arguments also against it, but the argument that it was a departure from ancient Quaker Movement was an argument wholly without validity."

Whatever it is, "What is important to realize is that the people can be faithful to the spirit even when there is a radical alteration in the letter. Outwardly, contemporary Quakers appear to be extremely different from the characteristic Quakers of two hundred years ago." The same can be said to have happened within this one hundred years of the Ramakrishna Movement. Everywhere a great seepy change has come over, not only in the outward formal characteristics but in the spirit also. This cannot be helped for spirit is nothing but - "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." (EPH 4:1) Everybody has to understand that, "Whatever the vocation may be, it must be one which refers to the world and not to the task of keeping, for its own sake." The consequence is dire in such case for all the movements.

And so what happened was that "the sense of vocation was nearly lost in the decades when friends met, month after month, with a constant reduction in numbers, because they were always expelling from membership those who did not conform to a fixed pattern of conduct but now the sense of vocation is being recovered." In the midst of all this turmoil the one concept which stood like a rock was that "whatever the character of the authentic Quaker

vocation may be, it must not be sectarian." This conceptual approach of the Quaker Movement is exactly like that of the Ramakrishna Movement which has been non-sectarian so far. Probably 'sect' / 'cult' and denomination etc. are going to be put up against the Ramakrishna Order, shortly according to the desire of the authorities, which was so long avoided, atleast it had never surfaced like that before in the presence of followers and the public somehow. Surely, no movement can be true and genuine unless it offers something greater than the already existing pattern to which contemporary people are often satisfied with. And, "The most vivid mark of the contemporary Quaker failure is the slightness of the product that is sufficient to bring encouragement. The reason is not the lack of accomplishment but smallness of expectancy!" A movement has to decide which way to go between these two.

Another significant feature which the Quaker Movement shares with the Ramakrishna Movement is that kind of dilemma within the movement as to the gaining of inner experience or doing service to the less fortunate. In both the Movements, "There have always been those who have so stressed the inner experience that they have in effect, neglected the work of service in the world and there have also been those on the otherhand, who, impatient with the life of devotion, have hurried on to feed the hungry or to clothe the naked." Therefore, in order to bridge these two different views, that bring unity between the two approaches

efforts are being made constantly by the leaders of both the Movements. Quakers call it a 'call' - i.e. a verb with a fundamental transitivity. And, "the person who is called is always called to do something or other" specially his or her service to the Order or to the fellow being. Call is a grace of the God, but it is man's responsibility to respond to the call according to his or her nature or capacity. Swami Vivekananda said 'It is the greatest privilege in our life that we are allowed to serve the Lord in all these shapes'.

If the movements fail to take up such service oriented work what is the use of such large investments, organisations run on the most modern and scientific basis and countless imposing buildings? Already the crowds that are coming to such religious centres are thinning out and consist of more women than men. This clearly shows that what is required is the urgent renewal of the spirit of service to the fellow-men, to the poor and sick and to the helpless women. Dynamic action in this direction is called for from all the movements. The present impoverishment of the human spirit is mostly due to material laxity and social poverty and cultural stagnation.

To fight against such stagnation personalities like Rufus Jones who started meeting people in the colleges and educational centres where he discussed and later sermonized to them the Quaker way of life. He preferred to talk to an audience outside the Quaker Movement. He faced little opposition from other Movements, since being a Quaker he was not expected to compete with any other

denominations in their respective activities. What the Quakers considered as the most important necessity was, "The need to spread, to as many sincere seekers as possible, those insights which have emerged in the course of the Quaker experiment and which all men whether they recognise their need or not." One can with certainty say that this was almost the spirit in the early days of the Ramakrishna Movement.

One thing which is very thoughtful and worth emulating is the Quakers' forethought about the future of the Movement. They were very much concerned as to how the future should be dealt with. For such a concern, not only faith, but vision with faith should go side by side. In this respect Quakers were very evangelical and their constant thought was - WITHER? Wither this Movement is going to take us? Mere faith would not have given this forward looking tendency. They were able to think and prepare for any future eventuality mainly because "Quakers have never had a (fixed) creed, there has naturally been wide latitude in belief and sometimes Quakerism has tended in the direction of a mere ethical culture society, but the invariable end of that is death." The realistic approach of the Quakers and their concrete programme saved the movement from death long before. It did not value much or paid much importance to the theoretical dabbling and philosophical concept which enabled it to stand out as an unique Movement indeed.

If the Quaker Movement accepted any creed at all, then Quakers like George Fox mainly believed in every item of the Apostle's creed. What is really interesting in this respect i.e. the theological point. It is a fact that Fox believed not only in the Apostle's Creed but in something more. And "Because it was this 'more' that was significant, Fox did not bother to argue for the basic faith with which he began and which he shared with his Christian neighbours, but he did argue for the 'extra' which seemed to him to give life to the dry bones of mere belief. Far from doubting Christ's atonement for sinful men, Fox believed in it so fully that, to the horror of his Christian neighbours, he interpreted Christ's revelation as actually- 'retroactive' and thus universal in time as well as in space." According to the Quakers (like George Fox): "Since this self-revelation is not limited temporally or spatially, it is not limited to the incarnation, in human history even though perfectly expressed by that event."

So this Quaker's concept of 'more' is almost like the Vedantic idea to which Ramakrishnaism also adheres to (as suggested by Sri Ramakrishna's teachings) and tries to go beyond all the theological concepts of incarnation with the sole purpose for the attainment of the perception of God in the 'person' - it seeks a transcendence from all these limited and mundane aspects of the faith and belief and thus gets into that stage of 'principle' - thereby it touches an infinite aspect of the spiritual realization beyond all forms and

limitations. Now, 'person' or 'principle' - the perception is very much divided.

It looks as though with the passage of time, Ramakrishnaism of the Ramakrishna Order has got stuck-up somewhere in between sect and form, personality and the cult - and as well the 'principle' or the value, which it is persistently claiming as that 'more' and 'more' (as already referred to in the manner George Fox did) atleast in the uncleared legal jungle of the socalled religion and creedal niceties. That too somewhere in the court - in confronting what looks to be a small moment of historical and political challange before the movement - mainly in the Eastern part of the country (India) - from a small corner. It would be interesting to watch how it comes out of this debate in itself, through itself and by itself - carefully avoiding the socalled legal interpretation. After all it is imperative that the leaders of the Movement will have to decide such matters very carefully - so that the Movement may not get harmed in any way unnecessarily. May be what is said about the Quaker Movement - " (its) method of reaching decisions is slow and outwardly inefficient but the results are often healing" and most probably permanent, also applies to the Ramakrishna Movement, atleast in the above episode. Let us see!

